BACK TO THE BEGINNING!

THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN IS EXHUMED AND DECONSTRUCTED IN "THE FACT OF FICTION"

OFF THE EDGE OF THE MAP!

TITAN MAP MAN **LEO HARTAS** IS INTERVIEWED

ISSUE 6 | MAY 2011

Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY FAN MAGAZINE

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

STEVE LUXTON SPEAKS!

PLUS A **BRAND NEW** **FIGHTING FANTASY** MINI ADVENTURE!
CAN **YOU** ACHIEVE FREEDOM IN YOUR ***ESCAPE FROM THE SORCERER***?

letter from the editor

Welcome back to another issue of *Fighting Fantazine* (our second for the year) and, after the survey-dominated previous issue, we're back to our usual selection of offerings – alongisde the second half of the survey results that covers everything we couldn't squeeze into the last issue!

Speaking of squeezing...

We kick off this issue with two interviews, talking with two of the artists whose maps helped bring Titan to life. And speaking of building Titan, the Fact of Fiction article goes right back to the beginning with *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*.

In addition to this we have another mini adventure for you to play and enjoy, this time from Sunil Prasannan and Michael Wolmarans. There is also more fiction from Ian Brocklehurst as Raven's mission gets tougher, and Ed Jolley is back with more morals. Take note all you weary adventurers.

Meanwhile, two new, hopefully ongoing, features appear here for the first time. They are the long promised arrival of the reviews section, this issue covering the latest four Wizard Books reprints, and The Magic Quest, where any fan can take a page to explore how they became *Fighting Fantasy* fans in the first place and explain what the series means to them personally.

We had hoped to also launch a letters page under the name "Mampang Mailbox", but we weren't quite there with enough letters. This I would like to see in future issues as becoming a place where people can air opinions on *Fighting Fantasy*, this magazine, and gamebooks that wouldn't stretch to an article. I'm hoping that perhaps the second half of the survey results might provoke some letters. So people, please write in to the magazine and let us know what you thought of this issue!

Coming next issue, we have more of the same lined up for you (check out page 91 for some of the details), hopefully along with a bursting to the brim letters page! Also you can look forward to a refresh of the magazine look and layout. Till then, I'll leave you enjoy this issue.

Alex

Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine
Issue 6. Published May 2011.
Published three to four times a year.
http://fightingfantazine.bravehost.com/

Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine is an outgrowth of the Yahoo! discussion group *Titan Rebuilding* which can be found at:
Games.groups.yahoo.com/group/titan_rebuilding/
and the wikia *Titannica* found here:
Fightingfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page

CONTRIBUTIONS
Contributions to the fanzine in the form of letters, articles, reviews, fanfiction, artwork, comics et cetera are welcomed and readily invited. These can be sent to the editor via e-mail as long as it is a standard format like JPEG and the scan is of high quality.

NEXT DEADLINE:
June 24th 2011

All *Fighting Fantasy* material is © Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone, Wizard Books 2011. All other material is © **Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine** and the individual writers and artists unless otherwise indicated. **Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine** is a not-for-profit fanzine and no attempt has been made to supersede the copyrights held by Wizard Books, Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone or any other persons or organisations. No similarity between any of the fictional names, characters persons and/or institutions herein with those of any living or dead persons or institutions is intended and any such similarity is purely coincidental. The views expressed in this fan publication (**Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine**) are those of the credited writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor. Nothing may be reproduced by any means in whole or part without written permission of the publishers. All letters sent to this fanzine will be considered for publication, but the publishers cannot be held responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork.

© 2011

Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY FAN MAGAZINE

ISSUE 6 | MAY 2011

FEATURES

08 interview:

Cartographer of Titan

Leo Hartas provided the *Fighting Fantasy* range with a number of maps over the years. *Fighting Fantazine* talks to him about fantasy art and mapping Titan.

18 mini adventure:

ECSAPE FROM THE SORCERER

by **Sunil Prasannan**
Illustrated by **Michael Wolmarans**

The kingdom of Alkemis has come under repeated attack from neighbouring Agra. Unable to hold back the hordes of Lizard Men and chaotic Asuras led by the evil sorcerer Grudar Kreshnel, YOU and a few dozen fellow survivors were captured. One by one your fellow countrymen have been brutally executed, until only YOU remain. Will YOU be able to escape from the Sorcerer?

50 the fact of fiction:

THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

It is a trip back to the very beginning, with the first book getting the going over. What things might you have overlooked on your various trips through the bowels of Firetop Mountain?

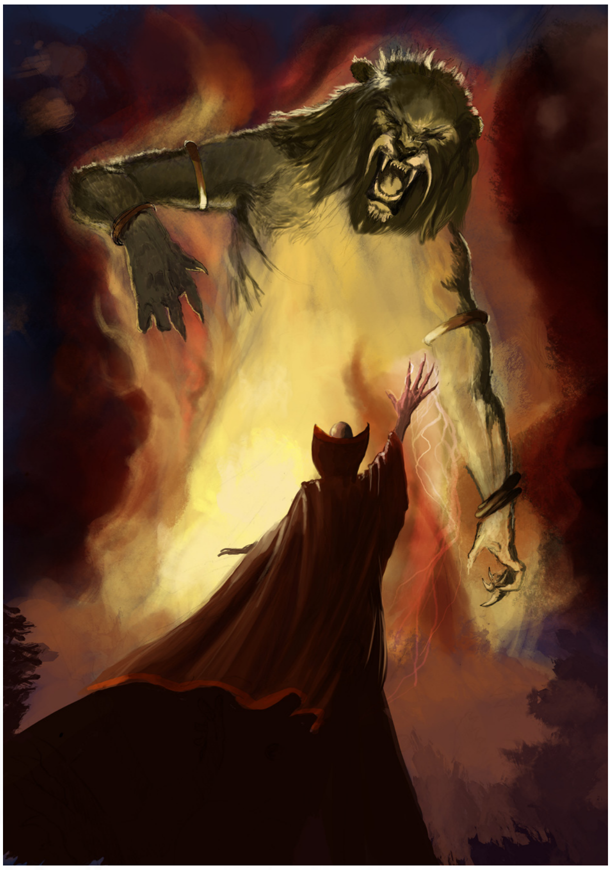
OTHERS

14 INTERVIEW: STEVE LUXTON
58 TURN TO PARAGRAPH 400 PART 2
66 *AELOUS RAVEN AND THE WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH* CHAPTER 2
76 *ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY* COMPETITION
78 EVERYTHING I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNT FROM READING *FIGHTING FANTASY* GAMEBOOKS PART 4

REGULARS

04 OMENS & AUGURIES
72 OUT OF THE PIT
77 THE MAGIC QUEST
80 CHRONICLE OF HEROES
84 THE ARCANE ARCHIVE
88 FIGHTING FANTASY COLLECTOR
90 FIGHTING DANTASY

Turn to paragraph **1**.



STAFF

Editor:
ALEXANDER BALLINGALL
fightingfantazine@gmail.com

News Editor:
GUILLERMO PAREDES

Out of the Pit Editor:
ANDREW WRIGHT

Adventure Editor:
DEMIAN KATZ

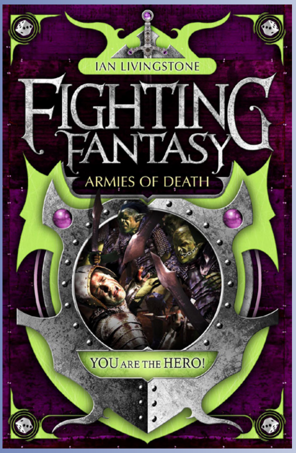
Front Cover Artwork:
MICHAEL WOLMARANS

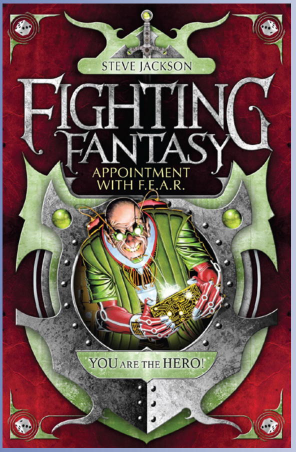
Back Cover Artwork:
MICHAEL WOLMARANS

With thanks to: Angus Abranson, Graham Bottley, Leo Hartas, Henry Lord, Steve Luxton, and the rest of the team at *Titan Rebuilding* for their support.

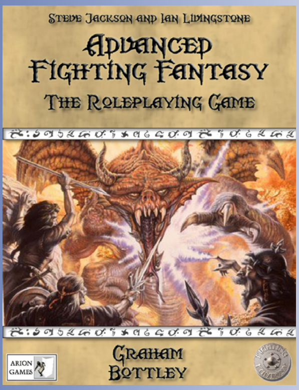
Where possible, permission from the artists has been sought for the reproduction of *Fighting Fantasy* art. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Editor. "I-Abail is again disappointed and tries to persuade you that the risks are minimal."

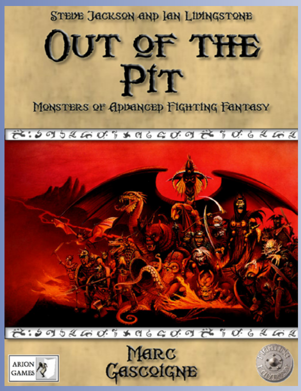
OMENS & AUGURIES


IAN LIVINGSTONE
FIGHTING FANTASY
ARMIES OF DEATH
YOU ARE THE HERO!


STEVE JACKSON
FIGHTING FANTASY
APPOINTMENT WITH F.E.A.R.
YOU ARE THE HERO!

IAN LIVINGSTONE
FIGHTING FANTASY
YOU ARE THE HERO!
DEATHTRAP DUNGEON


STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
ARION GAMES
GRAHAM BOTTLEY


STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
OUT OF THE PIT
MONSTERS OF ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
ARION GAMES
MARC GASCOIGNE

New *Fighting Fantasy* releases

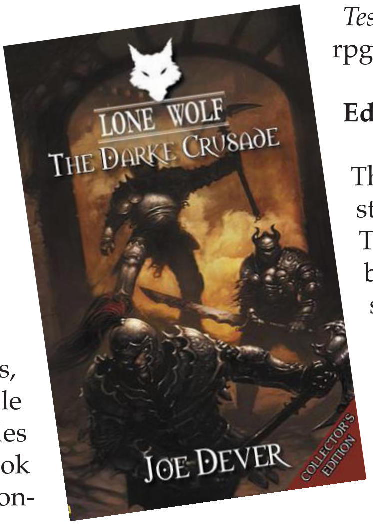
So far this year we have had four reissued *Fighting Fantasy* books: *Forest of Doom* (#13) and *Curse of the Mummy* (#14) we both published in February, while *Armies of Death* (#15) and *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* (#16) were brought forward from their April release dates to be published on March 31st. Each of these books retails for 5.99 GBP. There have been no announcements of any new releases for the rest of the year, which is troubling. What will the future hold for *Fighting Fantasy*?

STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
TITAN
THE ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY WORLD
ARION GAMES
MARC GASCOIGNE

Worldweaver released *The Citadel of Chaos* for the Kindle platform at the end of March (28th). Both it and *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* are only available if your Kindle is registered to a United States user. For those Americans who own a Kindle, this is good news: the books handle all die rolls and character stats automatically, so you don't have to keep dice or paper handy. These editions also incorporate an automatic mapping system. The company has revealed the cover for the upcoming *Deathtrap Dungeon* (release date has yet to be determined) here: www.worldweaver.com/fightingfantasy.aspx.

Cubicle 7 Entertainment will release the second edition of the multi-player *Fighting Fantasy* RPG in June 2011. *Advanced Fighting Fantasy: The Roleplaying Game* rulebook will be available for 19.99 GBP, while *Out of the Pit* and *Titan* will retail for 16.99 GBP each. The books will contain an updated game system with several improvements meant to address the shortcomings of previous *Fighting Fantasy* RPGs. You can visit shop.cubicle7store.com for more info.

Lone Wolf


LONE WOLF
THE DARKE CRUSADE
JOE DEVER
COLLECTOR'S EDITION

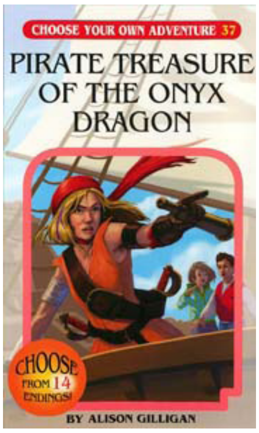
Book 15 in the *Lone Wolf* series, *The Darke Crusade*, is available in a new edition that includes a bonus adventure. The book can be bought at www.mongoosepublishing.com. Mongoose Publishing has also been busy publishing supplements for their *Lone Wolf Multiplayer Gamebook* RPG. Check out *Book of the Magnakai*, which allows you top lay Magnakai characters, and *Corruption of Ikaya*, a campaign set in the frozen wastes of Kalte. All books mentioned are available for 15.00 GBP.

Fabled Lands

Megara Entertainment is working on the iApp version of *Cities of Gold and Glory*. There is no set date or price for the App but we will inform you as soon as we have more info. For the time being you can visit megara-entertainment.com/fabled_lands_ii.html

The rulebook and the Sokara setting book for the *Fabled Lands* multi-player RPG are scheduled for release later this year. The rulebook will be available in June and the setting book in September. Each of the books will retail for 19.99 GBP. Visit www.greywoodpublishing.com for more info.

Choose your Own Adventure


CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE 37
PIRATE TREASURE OF THE ONYX DRAGON
CHOOSE FROM 14 ENDINGS!
BY ALISON GILLIGAN

Treasure of the Onyx Dragon has been reissued under the title *Pirate Treasure of the Onyx Dragon*. The book is available for 6.99 USD. Visit www.cyoa.com for more info.

Tunnels & Trolls

A new solo for this game has been released by Flying Buffalo. *The Wizard's Test* can be downloaded from www.rpgnow.com for 2.95 USD.

Editorial Hidra

This Spanish publisher is still going strong with their gamebook releases. They now have released fourteen books for their *Tu decides la aventura* series (the latest being *In Another World* and *Ninja Challenge*). They have also released a new pick-a-path series titled *Aguila Roja* with a continuing storyline. The first two titles are already out and are titled *El impostor* (The Imposter) and *Lo-*

Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
The Roleplaying Game
Graham Bottley
Arion Games
Out of the Pit
Monsters of Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Marc Gascoigne
Arion Games
Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Titan
The Advanced Fighting Fantasy World
Marc Gascoigne
Arion Games

ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY

IS BACK...

A classic from the classic age of Roleplaying games: Advanced Fighting Fantasy lives again.

Returning from oblivion like Zagor the Warlock, the brand new core book provides a complete set of rules to play in the world of Fighting Fantasy, backed up by the re-release of Titan and Out of the Pit, providing enough monsters and information for years of adventuring!

Originally published as three separate books, this classic game has now been revised, re-written and re-released for a new generation of gamers. The new version of Advanced Fighting Fantasy is perfect for original fans of the game, experienced roleplayers new to Fighting Fantasy and is ideal for those new to roleplaying.

Available from May 2011 from all good Game Stores, bookshops, online retailers and direct from Cubicle 7.

CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

www.cubicle7.co.uk

ARION GAMES

STEVE LUXTON '86

Coming to a Game Shop near you in June 2011

DAVE MORRIS & JAMIE THOMSON

FABLED LANDS

ROLE PLAYING GAME

GREYWOOD PUBLISHING

www.greywoodpublishing.com

CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

www.cubicle7store.com

Fabled Lands is © Dave Morris and Jamie Thomson and is used under license
Images are © Megara Entertainment and are used with permission.

THE WIZARD FROM
TARNATH TOR

bos de mar (Sea wolves). Each title is available for 9.95 EUR. Visit www.editorialhidra.com for more info.

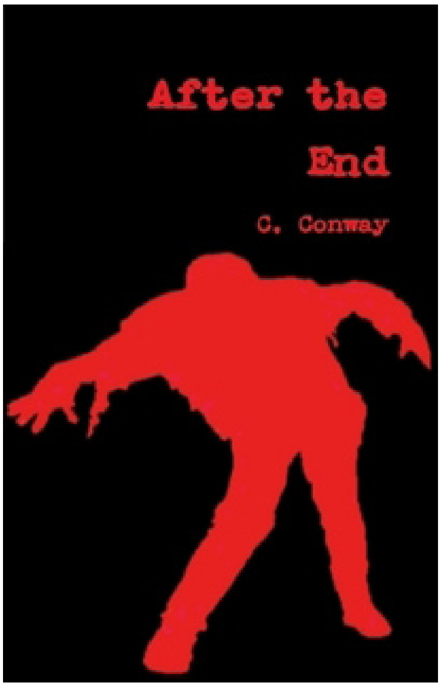
Gamebook Adventures

The *Gamebook Adventures* series continues. *Catacombs of the Undercity* is now available and *The Wizard from Tarnath Tor* is due out shortly. They have also signed on *Fighting Fantasy* writer Jonathan Green for their seventh title, *Temple of the Spider God* which is scheduled for release later in the year.

Die Welt der 1000 Abenteuer

This German fantasy gamebook series is now on its fourth installment. *Verrat an der Zauberschule* (Betrayal at the School of Magic) is available for 9.99 EUR.

Miscellaneous Releases


After the
End
C. Conway

Online publisher Lulu has proved to be a popular venue for authors of pick-a-path books. One example is *After the End* by C. Conway, which describes itself as a "choose your own adventure story set after zombies destroy civilization, when survivors are trying to put the pieces back together". It is available for 9.99 USD. Another one is *The Shrunken Gump*, which can be freely downloaded or bought in paper form for 5.80 USD. This book puts you in the shoes of a person who has been shrunk down to an inch tall and must face many dangers.

Fighting Fantasy's Jonathan Green now writing for GA!
GAMEBOOK ADVENTURES
iPhone, iPod Touch & iPad
coming soon to Kindle & Android
www.gamebookadventures.com
Available on the App Store

Leo Hartas is rightly remembered by Fighting Fantasy *fans for his elaborate and colourful maps of the world of Titan.* Fighting Fantazine *tracked him down to ask him about mapping and what he is up to now.*

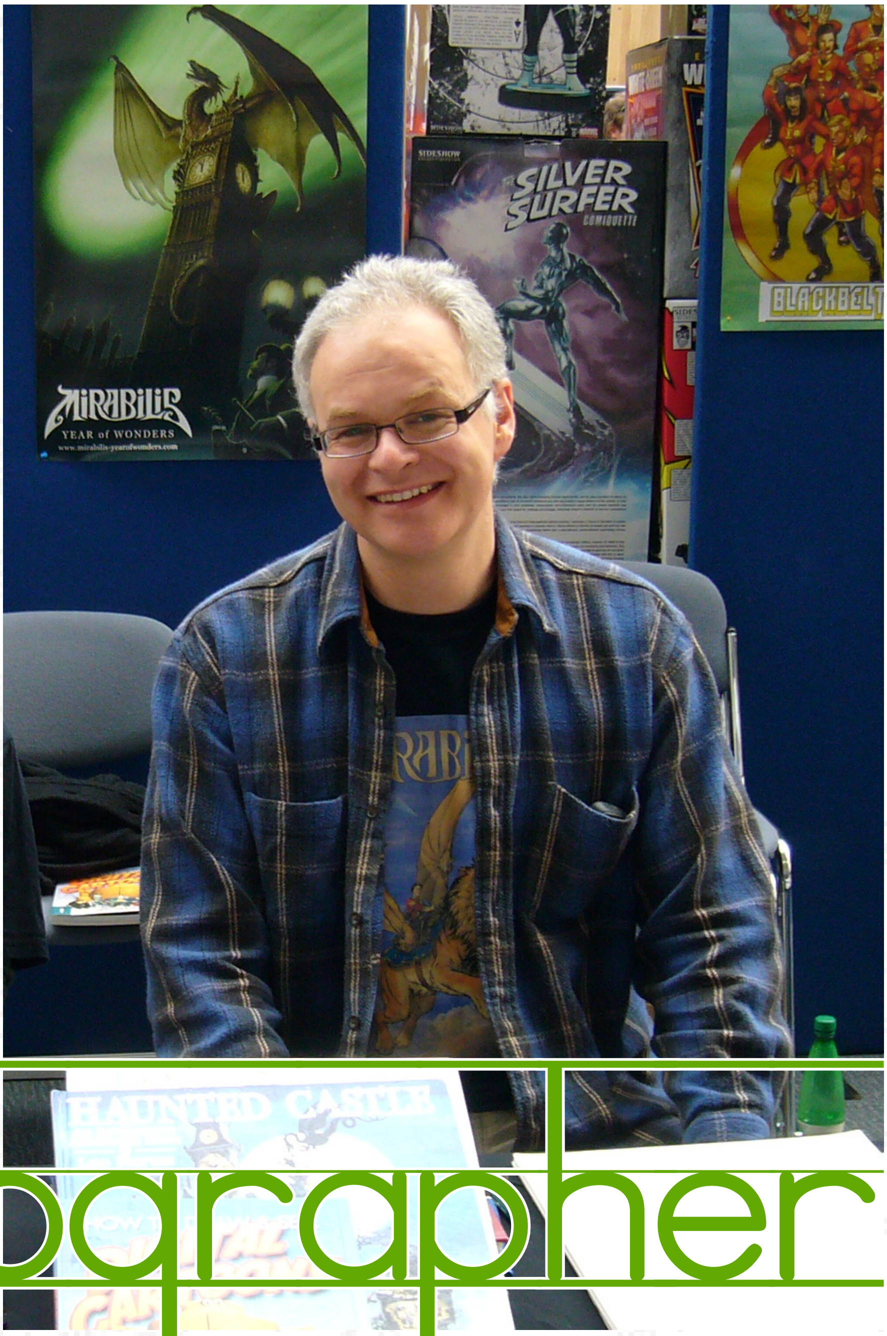
IN THE BEGINNING

What can you tell us about your background and childhood?

I drew a lot. The great thing is both my parents were artists so always encouraged me. This was mixed with a love for fantasy and sci-fi, which back in the 60s and 70s was still evolving. I remember one of my favourite books was an album about the fantasy artist Roger Dean as well a giant puzzle book about Brugel.

Was art something that you pursued throughout your schooling?

I went to a regular primary school then comprehensive and tried to impress the girls with drawing, as I knew I'd be hopeless at anything sporty. I was known as an artist and often got dragged into painting posters for the school panto and drawings in the school magazine. It was at secondary school that I got into playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with a couple of friends and collecting and painting miniatures.



Cartographer

FIGHTING FANTAZINE TALKS TO WRITER **LEO HARTAS** ABOUT MAPPING OUT

What finally prompted you to look at being an artist as a career?

It was during my first year at A level when I complained to my father about how I was fed up with school. To my surprise he said I should try to apply for the Art Foundation course at Brighton and chuck school in. Although my parents always encouraged my art they never before suggested I could make a future doing it, and it had never occurred to me that I could do something I enjoyed so much. Back then art was frowned on as a career, probably still is. I got on the foundation course then went on to a degree and finally a masters.

Who would you cite as influences on your art style and who are your favourite artists?

I have a lot of favourites, too many to mention here. Here are just a few: Cruickshank, Rowlandson, Hogarth and Gillray. All the great classic English illustrators. I love the style and wry look at life. Giles and Hoffnung are two comic genius's. More recently I really like the work of Guy Davis, and many of the French comic artists such as Mobius, Crepax and Manara.

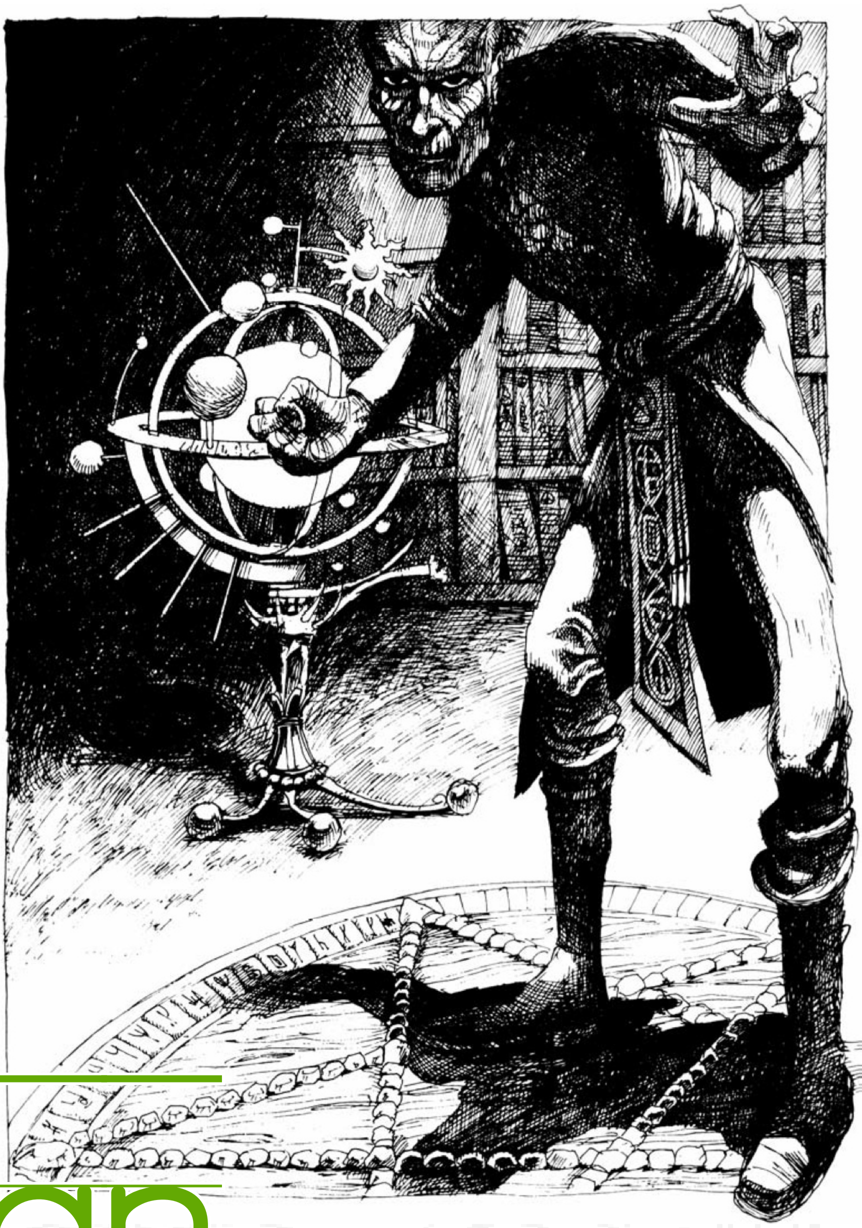
What was your first paid piece of art and what was like making that first contract?

My first paid piece of art was for Granada Publishing and is a story that comes right up to my present work. I sent some samples to *White Dwarf* magazine in the year I had off between my foundation art and degree, it must have been 1983. I was ushered into a rather chaotic and busy office and showed my work to the various people milling around. I didn't get any work from *White Dwarf*, at least not for a while. Instead I received a call from Dave Morris, who happened to be one of those people milling around, and who had just got his first book publishing deal with Granada. I met Dave in Pevensey and we both found we had many common interests and enthusiasms. I went on to illustrate several of Dave's *Golden Dragon Fantasy Gamebooks*, and his *Dragon Warriors* series. I still work with him now, illustrating the *Mirabilis: Year of Wonders* graphic novel.

That's the story of how it happened. What is was like? Well I was very excited having stumbled onto a route into professional work, but I quickly found out about the pressures. I had to work very fast, in the end averaging two illustrations a day to make the deadlines. It really helped financially through my degree course. I remember a girl, a fellow student, discovering I had some books published. She was impressed and rushed into town to find them in a bookshop. I really thought I'd made it with the girls, until she came back totally unimpressed that it was a fantasy book.

Dave Morris' name crops up often in your work with fantasy art, how would you describe the man?

Awful dress sense with an unnatural penchant for wearing shorts and loud shirts at inappropriate times of the year. Not really! Dave and I are still working together today. He is way more intelligent than me with a full and varied imagination. Added to this is a sharp knowledge of game mechanics and systems, something he can bring to bear to analyse all kinds of things, from going about writing novels to putting the rubbish out. Oh, and beating me at *Age of Empires* every time for the last fifteen years or so! He is also funny, interesting, polite, kind and always generous.

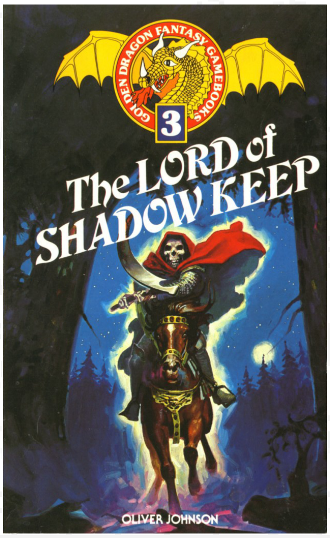


of Titan

A WORLD OF FANTASY

How would you describe the life of a freelance artist?

Enjoyable, but sometimes difficult. The best thing is that I am more or less doing what I always wanted to, and that I work from home so I spend a lot of time with my family in lovely surroundings. The difficult thing is managing deadlines, getting new work, reasonably paid work, and then once you've done it, getting paid. I've managed to scrape by for the last twenty or so years, some years better than others.



Across 1984/85 you illustrated the interior art for four of the *Golden Dragon Fantasy Gamebooks*. What was it like working on those titles and how did the experience compare to your time with *Fighting Fantasy*?

It was a great experience. I like painting maps, but full illustration is more interesting and demanding. I remember enjoying doing them, though having to learn to work pretty fast producing three illustrations a day to meet deadlines.

Top: Leo's illustration of Throngard, the villain of the mini adventure *Fortress Throngard* from *Warlock* #9 (1986). Above: One of the many gamebooks Leo has illustrated (Cover: Bruno Elettori).

Art: © Leo Hartas, 2011. Used with permission.

You did similar work on *Dragon Warriors* in 1985/86. Again, what was like working on these?

A number of people said they liked my work on *Dragon Warriors*, but to be honest I think I was a bit distracted with my course work at Brighton Polytechnic and they turned out not as good as I would have hoped. It was also a slightly odd position as I was illustrating the game mechanics as much as the stories, with a slightly jokey style.

KELTHER
N
R. Swordflow
GORAK
KAZAN
MAVRA KHOMATA
KAZILIK
URUZ
HULUGU
BOGOMIL
R. Dart
OWLSHRIEK
SHARRABBAS
BOGOMIL DEEPS
Paths of Ushuri Koya
NIGENIK
LESSER ILKHANS
KORKUT
R. Djimatos
GREATER ILKHANS
LEO HARTAS

How did you feel about the reprints of *Dragon Warriors* opting for new artwork over your originals?

They asked me first but I was too busy on *Mirabilis* at the time. I think the new art is excellent and matches the atmosphere of the game world.

Outside of your *Fighting Fantasy* output, which of your works are happiest with?

I did a book called *Haunted Castle* back in the 90s published by Dorling Kindersley. Along with another book, *This Old House*, they were full of imaginative detail and innovative story telling. Unfortunately the publishers took them off their list just a couple of years after release, despite their relative success.

FIRST FORAYS INTO *FIGHTING FANTASY*

Early art for *Fighting Fantasy* from you included the internal illustrations for the short adventures *The Tower of Hades* in *Warlock* #8 and *Fortress Throngard* in *Warlock* #9. How did you end up being commissioned for these jobs?

It was through my visiting *White Dwarf* and becoming friends with Dave. At that time the whole RPG games scene was small and everyone knew everyone. I can't remember who called me with the job.

TOWER OF DESTRUCTION
FROZEN PLATEAU
PLAINS
LEO HARTAS

Did you ever pitch to illustrate one of the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks in the same manner?

I never pitched for the *Fighting Fantasy* books, again I must have been passed on through word of mouth. I do remember however, that it was Richard Scrivener at Puffin who first commissioned me, and then went on to continue with the rest of the series.

Looking back on it now, what is your reaction to your illustrations for *Fortress Throngard*?

They were okay, considering I was just starting out. A lot of crosshatching with a rotering pen! Wow those pens were a delight and a pain to use. The fine line was something to behold but the endless coaxing them to work could drive you mad. I would hope now that my figure drawing has improved, but I can see the same unconscious style that always appears in my work.

As I remember they made suggestions of which paragraphs to illustrate, but mainly it was up to me. I can remember trying a curious lighting of the title which was inscribed on a stone block. I'd just discovered the work of Gustav Dore which was influencing my style quite a bit.

How did you end up doing the maps for *The Riddling Reaver*, your first of many *Fighting Fantasy* maps?

It was a straight commission from Richard Scrivener. I'll tell you a bit about the process, and why I enjoyed doing them so much. Richard would call me to see if I was free for the next map and would send me a very rough sketch by the author along with any notes that may be relevant, but usually these were scant if present at all. Remember, this was all preproduction so I didn't even get to read the book. This was why I loved it. Total freedom to do as I wished. I had a book of old maps that I would pour over for inspiration. I also liked to think of different ways to portray the map to make it a bit different, through an arch, carved into a rock, even carved into a pillar exploding out of the page.

Do you recall why Richard Scrivener picked you to do the maps in *The Riddling Reaver*? Had you already

Above and facing page: A couple of Leo's maps from the *Fighting Fantasy* series. Top is *Daggers of Darkness* (1988), bottom is *Tower of Desruction* (1991), and opposite is *Siege of Sardath* (1992).

done fantasy maps elsewhere?
I can't remember. I think he probably saw maps I had done elsewhere. It's a long time ago.

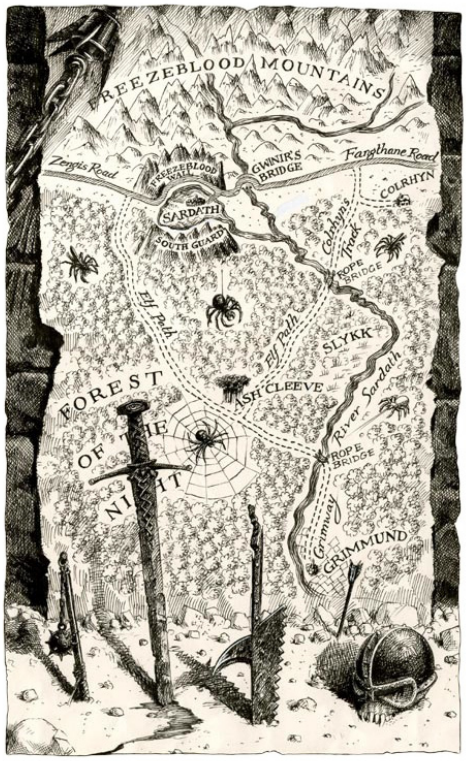
In *The Riddling Reaver* you did both black and white and colour maps and would do both later on the main series. Do you have a preference?
Not really, both have their own advantages, though I guess I like the, "grittiness" of the black and white cross-hatching. Black and white is also more predictable as to how it will appear in print. With colour you never know what the printing process will do it.

In doing the maps you joined Dave Andrews and Steve Luxton as the early cartographers of Titan. Did you ever look at what they were doing and alter your approach to compete or compliment theirs?
I don't remember seeing their work. Anyway, I know I wouldn't have changed my style to complement theirs. Everyone has their own individual style which makes working in illustration a joy.

THE MAPMAN COMETH – MAKING PLANS FOR TITAN

Generally, when it came to the colour maps of *Fighting Fantasy*, how much time would you have to work on one of these? Were the black and white maps quicker or easier to produce?
I remember I had a at least a few days to work on each map, but usually crammed it into one day! It's the story of my life and pretty much every other artist I have ever met, leave it to the last minute! Black and white is generally easier to produce, but not necessarily quicker.

You mention rotering pens elsewhere, what other materials/media would you use to complete your maps?
With both colour and black and white maps I used old fashioned dip pens, lining out in black or sepia Indian ink. On the colour maps I would stretch the watercolour paper then use Dr. Martins watercolour inks to paint because the colours are so vivid. I remember I also flicked paint from an old toothbrush to get an interesting texture. My main concern with colour or textures in black and white was to maintain clarity.



Out of all your maps for *Fighting Fantasy*, do you have a particular favourite?
Hmm, difficult to pick out a favourite, but I did like Forest of the Night (for *Siege of Sardath*) and the Tower of Destruction. Forest of the Night was at the height of a particular

selected bibliography

Apart from the books mentioned below I have worked for many children's magazines including *Horrible Histories* and the Cavendish partworks. You'll also find my work scattered in various text books and English language teaching books, no doubt drawn on by bored kids!

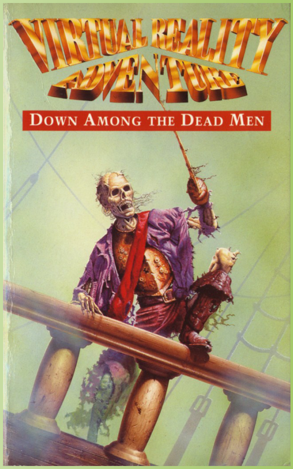
FIGHTING FANTASY

Gamebooks
Crypt of the Sorcerer (1987)
Battleblade Warrior (1988)
Slaves of the Abyss (1988)
Stealer of Souls (1988)
Daggers of Darkness (1988)
Armies of Death (1988)
Portal of Evil (1989)
Dead of Night (1989)
Master of Chaos (1990)
Black Vein Prophecy (1990)
The Keep of the Lich-Lord (1990)
Legend of the Shadow Warriors (1991)
Spectral Stalkers (1991)
Tower of Destruction (1991)
Moonrunner (1992)
Siege of Sardath (1992)
Return to Firetop Mountain (1992)

Other
The Tower of Hades (*Warlock* #8, 1986)
Fortress Throngard (*Warlock* #9, 1986)
Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World (1986)
The Riddling Reaver (1986)
Dungeoneer (1989)
The Trolltooth Wars (1989)
Firestorm (1993)
Darkthrone (1993)
Skullcrag (1994)
Demonlord (1994)

OTHER GAMEBOOKS

Golden Dragon Fantasy Gamebooks (Granada)
Crypt of the Vampire
The Temple of Flame
The Lord of Shadow Keep
Castle of Lost Souls

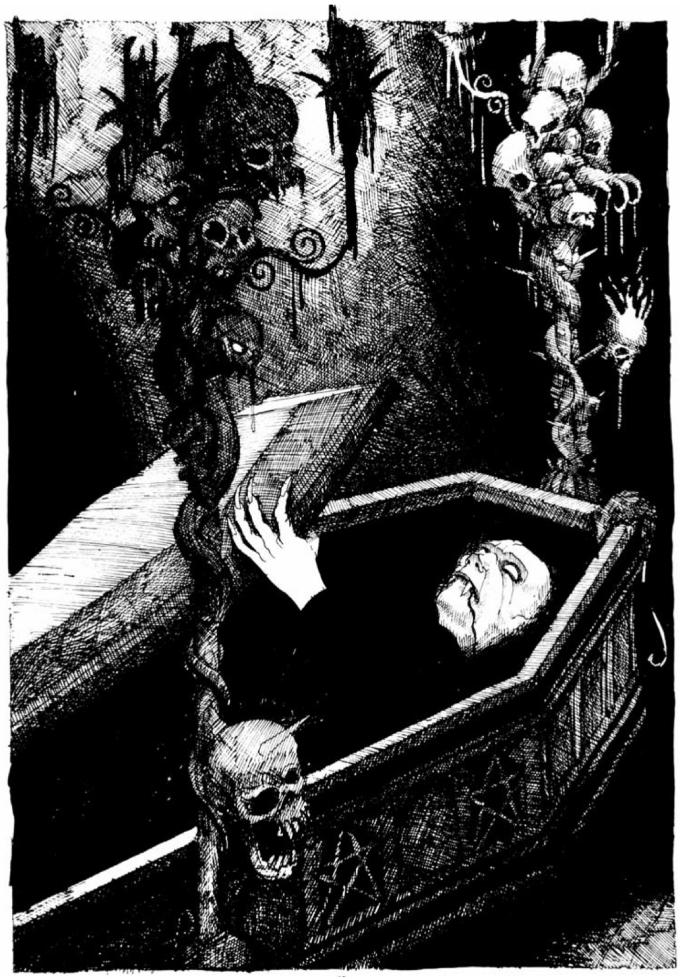


(Cover: Fred Gambino)

Virtual Reality (Reed Consumer Books)
Down Among the Dead Men (1993)

RPG BOOKS

Dragon Warriors (Corgi)
Dragon Warriors
The Way of Wizardry
The Elven Crystals
Out of the Shadows



OTHER WORKS

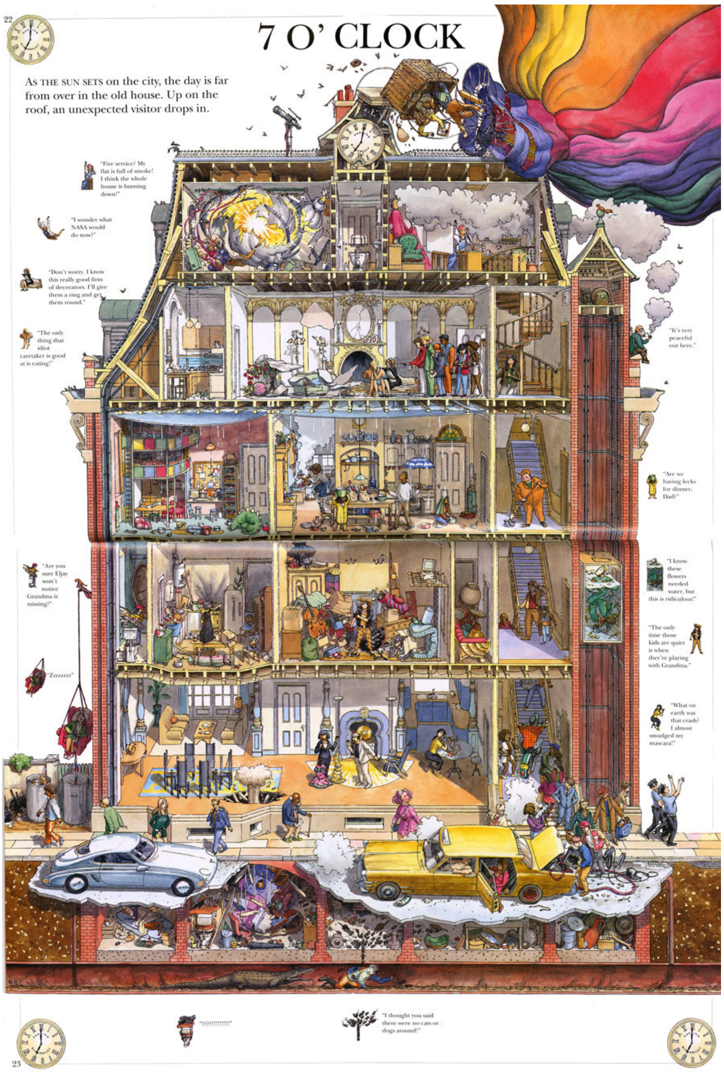
Flight and Floating (Collins, 1989)
Around the World (Award Publications, 1992)
King Arthur's Space Ship (Macmillan, 1993)
The Right Royal Brat (Walker Books, 1994)
Working on Snap Magazine (Walker, 1994)
This Old House (Dorling Kindersley, 1995)
The Cambridge Picture Dictionary
(Cambridge University Press, 1996)
Haunted Castle (Dorling Kindersley, 1997)
Mimi Mouse series (Walker Books, 1997)
It's Me series (Award Publications, 1999)
Tweenies series (BBC Worldwide, 1999)
Space Explorers Atlas (Dorling Kindersley, 1999)
Working in 3D Animation (Dorling Kindersley and
Zeppelin TV and Pearson, 2000)
Game Art (Ilex Press, 2003)
How to Draw and Sell Digital Cartoons (Ilex Press, 2004)
Game Gurus series (Ilex Press, 2004)
The Art of Game Worlds (Ilex Press, 2004)
Mini Maze series (Pinwheel, 2006)
Super Powers series (Puffin, 2007)
Secrets from the Dragon's World (Alligator Books, 2007)
Treasure Hunt (Tango Books, 2008)
Dragon Quest (Five Mile Press, 2008)
Pirates! (Award Publications, 2008)
Mirabilis: Year of Wonders (2009 to present)
Island of Adventure (Orion, 2011)

gritty cross-hatched style I'd developed for black and white. The weapons in the foreground were indicative of the perils contained in the map behind. Tower of Destruction was rather an obvious solution but fun nonetheless. A bit naughty actually because the illustration nearly made the map itself incomprehensible, the exact opposite of what I said in the last answer!

Did you ever get feedback (from either Puffin or fans) about your *Fighting Fantasy* maps? If so, what was it like?
I once got a letter from Steve Jackson himself praising my maps. Other than that not really. If I tell people that I was the one who did the maps they usually say how much they enjoyed them, but the maps were only a tiny feature of the books.

Curiously, the first edition of *Master of Chaos* (1991) doesn't have a map, yet the second edition does (the map of Ashkyos). What can you tell us about this late addition?
I don't know, but I would think that the publisher had more money to spend once the series started to become a phenomenon, and for completeness decided to update it with a map in a second edition.

You are credited in *The Crimson Tide* (1992) for a map, yet one does not feature. Can you recall what happened to the



7 O' CLOCK

As the sun sets on the city, the day is far from over in the old house. Up on the roof, an unexpected visitor drops in.

22
"Fire service? My flat is full of smoke! I think the whole house is burning down!"
"I wonder what NASA would do now?"
"Don't worry. I know this really good firm of decorators. I'll give them a ring and get them round."
"The only thing that idiot caretaker is good at is eating!"
"It's very peaceful out here."
"Are we having leeks for dinner, Dad?"
"Are you sure Eljay won't notice Grandma is missing?"
"I know these flowers needed water, but this is ridiculous!"
"The only time those kids are quiet is when they're playing with Grandma."
"Zzzzzzz"
"What on earth was that crash? I almost smudged my mascara!"
"?????!!!!!!!"
"I thought you said there were no cats or dogs around!"
23

Left: Another illustration from *Fortress Throngard*. Right: One of the pages from *This Old House* (*The Apartment Book* in the US) which was published in 1995. Opposite: Covers for *Mirabilis* Books One & Two (Cover of Book One by Martin McKenna).

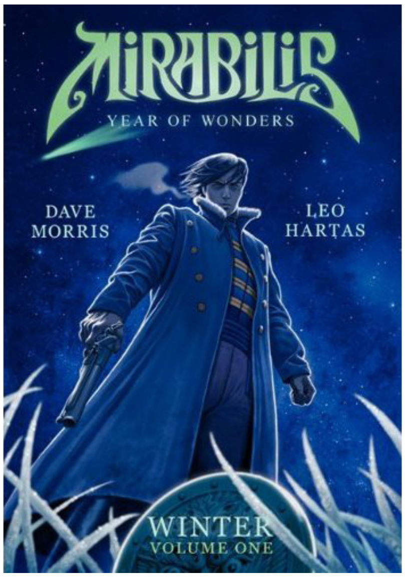
planned map and whether or not it was to be the last of the colour maps or the first of the black and white ones?
I suspect it was an oversight by the publisher.

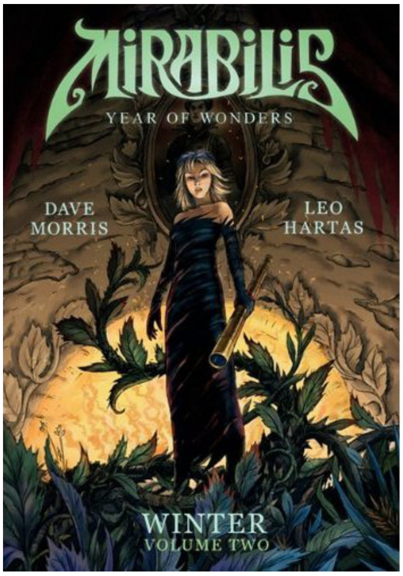
Were you disappointed that post-1992 reprints of the books by Puffin removed your maps?
To a degree because the maps were popular, so it was a shame for the readers. They also helped to put the adventures into a geographical context. In some ways it didn't bother me as I wasn't on royalties and was concentrating on other projects.

Were you ever contacted by Wizard Books about the possibility of supplying maps for their reprints of the series?
No. A shame really, but I can understand that they had to keep a tight rein on costs.

If you were offered the chance to do new maps of Titan, would you be interested?
Yes! The maps are a lot of fun to work on.

MIRABILIS: YEAR OF WONDERS





We've heard a little about *Mirabilis: Year of Wonders* from Martin McKenna. What can you tell about the origins of this venture?
Mirabilis: Year of Wonders was an idea Dave Morris and I had about fifteen years ago about a lost year in history where a comet comes close to the earth and releases all that is myth and fantasy into reality and integrates it with everyday life. For a while we didn't have a clear vehicle for the idea until David Fickling started the DFC comic for children and invited us to create a strip set in the *Mirabilis* world. Sadly the DFC was struck down by the credit crunch but we kept working on the story which had ballooned to a proposed 800 page epic.

Is this comic book style of illustrating a new style for you? If so, what sort of things have you learnt in the process?
I've always loved comics, but seen myself as more of a children's book illustrator. *Mirabilis* propelled me into the shear quantity of work comic drawing demands and I've found I just lap it up! I've learnt a lot, and continue learning, as comics have so many possibilities, from improving character drawing to making the backgrounds engaging to camera angles, timing and flow of frames, etc. In many ways it's like making a movie but with an unlimited budget.

Has there been any particular stand out pages for your in working on *Mirabilis*?
The witch in Book One. Just love drawing ugly! There's also a great page where Estelle, the heroine, appears in figure-hugging goth outfit. I love drawing cute girls too! I'm not really picking these on artistic merit, for that I would have to choose the whole enterprise. Not for my drawing, but rather for the incredible work of Nikos Koutsis, the colourist. We only give Nikos the barest minimum of direction, and he returns my line drawings fizzing with atmosphere, almost real 3D depth, and colours that seem to be back-lit even on the printed page. While I'm flinging praise at Nikos please may I also draw attention to Dave's writing. Dave puts a fantastic amount of work into the story at every level, from the main story arc, to the seemingly most trivial throwaway piece of dialogue. He constantly builds tensions, creates cliff-hangers, makes jokes, teases characters, and even builds in a good bit of social comment. We wanted a story that would cross generations, entertain, delight and bear multiple readings, and Dave delivers!

Would a non-Dave Morris comic be something you'd be willing to try?
Sure. I am a freelancer. However, working with Dave would take first priority.

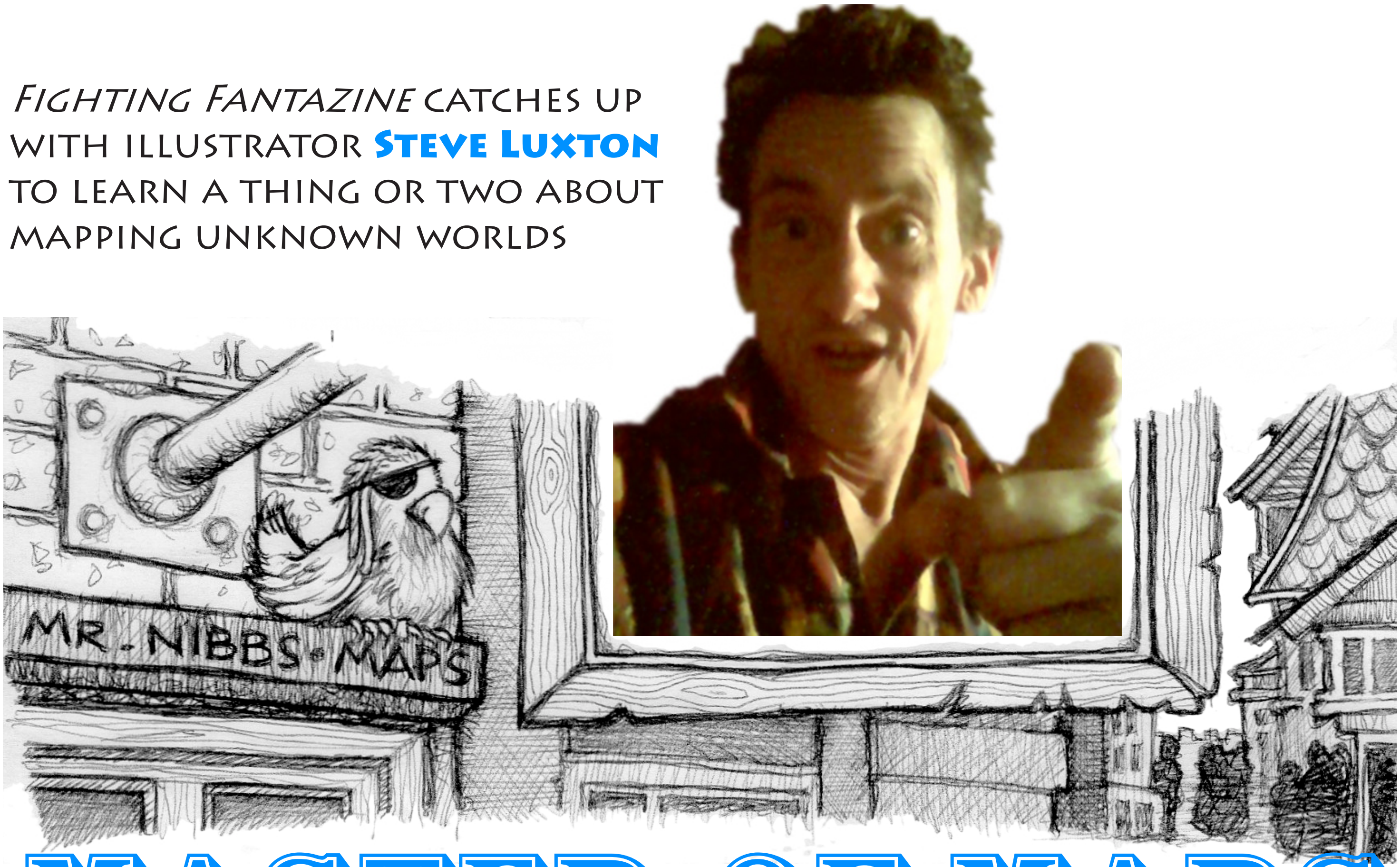
***Mirabilis* is available via digital download as well as print. What sort of impact do you think digital publication has made to your job and to *Mirabilis* in particular?**
That is being played out, but already our decision to try digital is having effects. We already have 7K+ downloads of the iPad app which is getting in front of not just potential fans, but also traditional print publishers and distributors worldwide. Our biggest enemy, and it's the same for all new creative endeavours, is obscurity. This was our main motivation to get the comic on the iPad, and other platforms as well as print, having it in as many channels as possible, and to some extent take advantage to the current "chatter" around them. We see digital as a very convenient way for readers to sample *Mirabilis*, get hooked, then choose carry on reading digitally and episodically, or buy it in printed graphic novel form. Some fear this will be the end for books, but I've just got the advance copy of *Mirabilis* in hardback in front of me, and it's gorgeous!

What other projects do you have on the go and what does the future hold for Leo Hartas?
For the time being I hope to be working on completing *Mirabilis*. We have 200 pages in the bag just published in the UK in two glorious hardback editions. I still work through my agent on various freelance children's projects such as illustrating the series *Adventure Island* for Orion books. I also design downloadable card cutout model kits, at www.fantasycutouts.com, and this year have got into the comic and RPG convention scene drawing for visitors.

Fighting Fantazine *would again like to offer thanks to Leo Hartas for agreeing to the interview. Meanwhile, readers can find out what else Leo is up to via his website: www.leohartas.com*

And if you have nothing to do on Thursday evenings you can listen to Leo on The Bantering Boys, a daft radio chat show most Thursday evenings at 9PM GMT on 10radio. www.10radio.org.

FIGHTING FANTAZINE CATCHES UP WITH ILLUSTRATOR **STEVE LUXTON** TO LEARN A THING OR TWO ABOUT MAPPING UNKNOWN WORLDS



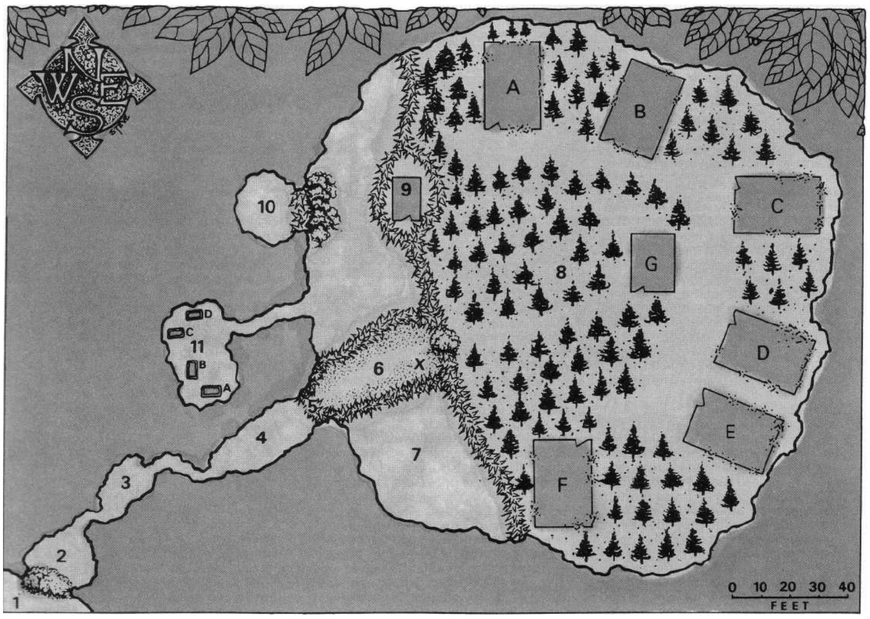
MASTER OF MAPS

DRAWING US A PICTURE

What can you tell us about your background and childhood?
I was born in Woking, Surrey in 1956. Most of my family paint and play music, so there was plenty of inspiration to be creative. My mother was trained as classical musician, but she died when I was very young. My father built boats, and I spent a lot of time sitting in a dinghy watching the river before I was old enough to work with him during school holidays.

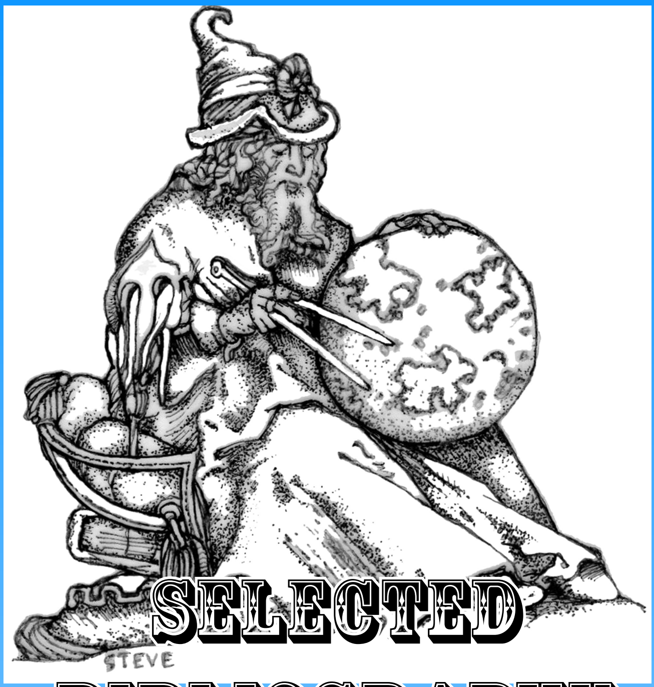
Were you interested in art/drawing while at school?
Art was one of my better subjects, as was technical drawing and music. I was lucky enough to have good teachers who gave me a grounding in both traditional and modern art and who gave me sensible answers when I asked awkward questions. I spend a lot more time making music than I do making images.

Did you go straight into freelance illustration after your tertiary education and if so, why?
The simple answer is that I am not an illustrator. I am primarily a typographic designer/project manager who commissioned illustrators. I qualified at St Martin's as a display designer in 1974 and after a few years in window and in-store display work, started in signwriting and poster advertising with Hill-Mason, which later became part of the London & Provincial Poster Group. The company also designed and built advertising hoardings. Initially I was preparing layouts for signwriters from artwork supplied by advertising agencies, and designing layouts for



Art: © Steve Luxton, 2011. Used with permission.

Opposite page: Steve's illustration of "Mr Nibbs", his alter ego.
Above: An early map from Steve, this one for the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* scenario *Nightmare in Green* by fellow *Fighting Fantasy* contributor Graeme Davis, published in *White Dwarf* #75 (1986).



SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIGHTING FANTASY

Art

Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World (1986)
Midnight Rogue (1987)
Chasms of Malice (1987)
Sky Lord (1988)
Vault of the Vampire (1989)
Fangs of Fury (1989)
Dungeoneer (1989)
Blacksand! (1990)

WHITE DWARF

Art

A Murder at Flaxton (Issue #67, 1985)
The Necklace of Brisingamen (Issue #72, 1985)
Nightmare in Green (Issue #75, 1986)
Castle in the Wind (Issue #76, 1986)

All the original artwork was given to a friend. She was living in Denmark at the time, but may have returned home to Australia by now. We lost touch a long time ago. I've done so much non-fantasy design and artwork I couldn't possibly list it all. Between 1974 to 1989 I produced artwork and layouts for companies from Abbey National to Young's Brewery. If you'll excuse the pun, my highest profile work would be the livery for the Virgin Atlantic fleet. The only piece of my artwork that has been produced for tv was a small sign which appeared in the background of a PG Tips chimp ad. I finished in advertising in 1989 and worked on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link project before joining the London Borough of Merton's planning department in late 1990. Most of my work involved designing and illustrating books on architectural conservation. Published work included *Designing Out Crime* (1994) and a series of Conservation Area Design Guides. Since 1997 most of my design work has been in the independent music industry.

companies who didn't use agencies. During a seven-year apprenticeship I did a lot of construction drawings, street maps, typographic and poster layouts, which are generally more technical than creative.

What is it like being a freelancer illustrator?

The *Fighting Fantasy* maps were done as a fan and it was a real privilege to be commissioned and published by Puffin Books. The requirements of the job, such as working to brief and delivering to deadline, was part of my day-job so I had no problem working with those. I wouldn't like to try making a living at it, and I have a lot of respect for people who do. The work I do now is almost entirely in the independent music industry, and mostly involves teaching and session-playing.

Which artists do you look up to or draw inspiration from often?

There are so many artists I admire that I now have favourite images rather than favourite artists. My drawing style comes from architecture and cartography and steals some tricks from Albrecht Dürer, William Morris and Patrick Woodroffe. Among my favourite fantasy illustrators are Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Josh Kirby.

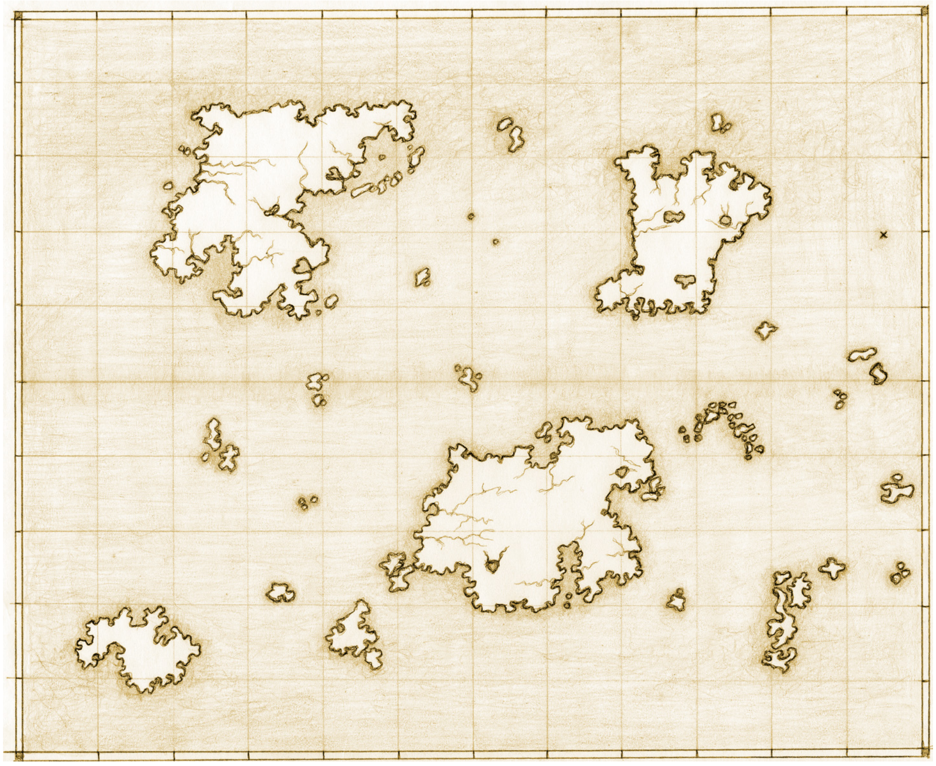
What sort of projects have you been involved with as a freelancer?

As a draftsman most of my work was done on long-term contracts, which is a different kind of business to freelancing. The main difference is that I would be working on just one project for a year or more at a time and producing hundreds of drawings. I spent a couple of years working on petro-chem projects producing maps of the North Sea. I then worked on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link project as part of the initial field survey team and later as a geotechnical draftsman on the main project, which was my day job while doing the Fighting Fantasy work. After that, I spent a year as a production manager in a vinyl graphics company. In 1990 I went for a complete change and took a full-time job in local government, designing and producing guidebooks and exhibitions relating to architectural and environmental conservation.

What has been your most challenging or interesting project as a designer?

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link project. The complete project was split into four sections and given to four different companies. I worked on the Ashford to Folkestone section which included the entrance to the tunnel itself. The initial field data study was prepared by two geologists who provided the data and sketch maps which were drawn up and compiled into a 300-page document for a House of Commons Select Committee. After approval, we spent the next year making hundreds of maps and geotechnical drawings, working in the next room to the design engineers.

What things have you learnt from these varied projects?



It's all about teamwork. Everyone involved in a project is doing a quite specific job that requires specialized skills, and producing their work in a way that has to fit with everyone else's. Professional respect is important, as is being adaptable.

Why did you leave art for music?

Like many people, I do more than one thing now so I haven't stopped making images. Most of my artwork is for friends in the independent music industry who typically need posters, flyers, cd art and web-graphics. I also get to perform, co-write, play sessions and get free beer.

I once had the opportunity to be a professional musician in 1974 but decided to get a proper job instead. I have enjoyed thirty years as a technical draftsman and / or graphic designer in poster advertising, oil exploration, civil engineering, more advertising, more civil engineering and finally in architectural conservation. I have also enjoyed performing live for thirty years and now I do both.

I have been involved in music projects since 2004. I have been lucky enough to be a regular player in bands featuring ex-members of Aswad and The Investigators, and playing guitar in writing sessions for Loose Ends singer, Sonay.

FANTASY ART

Your first fantasy work was for *White Dwarf*. How did this come about?

Purely by chance, and meeting some very helpful people in the right order. I was having a really crappy day hawking my portfolio around Hammersmith. I went into Games Workshop to buy myself a consolation prize and met Barney Sloane, who was working there at the time. He asked for a look at my portfolio, and amongst the poster designs were a couple of drawings of fantasy figures. Barney got me an interview with Mary Common, who was then art editor at *White Dwarf*, and she gave me my first commission. I did a run of work for *White Dwarf*, mostly for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* scenarios, and it was Marc Gascoigne who gave me my first *Fighting Fantasy* commission.

You state you were an experienced *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* player. Had you produced map-based material for your gaming before your work for *White Dwarf*?

I was a member of a busy table-top wargamers and RPG club and had the sort of GM who wrote huge campaigns that took three years to play and would be tied in with a play-by-mail campaign. There were lots of maps, plans and dioramas being produced, and I contributed to those.

The group I played in were big fans of *2000AD* and, in addition to the mapwork, I co-wrote and drew a cartoon strip for a fanzine called *Utter Drivel* with John Scrivens which, despite being called *Mutie Scumbags on the Rampage*, was voted second-best fanzine cartoon strip. I also wrote a *BloodBowl* ice hockey variant for *Utter Drivel*, called *Blood on the Ice*. Around this time, Games Workshop released the *Judge Dredd RPG*, and we thought we'd have a go at writing an RPG ourselves. We wanted to do *Rogue Trooper*, but that was already in progress. After discussion with Games Workshop Mike Royle, John Scrivens and myself wrote a *Strontium Dog RPG* in 1988. It was playtested at a Games Day but didn't get released.

Other fantasy related activities includes LARP at the original Treasure Trap at Peckforton Castle, learning to use a broadsword (got trashed) and shooting longbow (did quite well there and managed to beat a few national champions in club competitions).

Which of your *White Dwarf* contributions are you most proud of?

The *White Dwarf* artwork was a learning curve. The first drawings were pretty rough, but if I had to pick a favourite it would be *A Nightmare in Green* from *White Dwarf* #75. The important thing about my *White Dwarf* work as a whole was that it showed Games Workshop that was reliable and consistent. I got on with everyone I met there, was treated very well, and feel proud about being considered good enough to contribute.

MAPPING TITAN

Were you aware of *Fighting Fantasy* before your commission to work on it and what were your thoughts of it then? Have your feelings changed since then?

I played *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* when it came out, and maybe five or six other gamebooks before getting my

Above: An in-progress draft plan for a revised map of Titan that Steve is currently at work on, with help from fandom via posts at Andrew Wright's blog Fantasy Game Book: fantasygamebook.blogspot.com/

first commission for #29, *Midnight Rogue*. The simplicity of the gameplay and the game mechanics was a great contrast to the complexities of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* and the other RPGs I was playing, which was one reason I enjoyed them so much then. The main reason it was such a great game was that you could play it on your own and in short sessions. I haven't played it for a long time but the game still appeals.

What can you recall of the brief for your work on *Titan*? How close do you think you came to meeting it?
The brief was loose, although *Titan* was a natural progression from my earlier work with Games Workshop and I'd worked with Marc Gascoigne before. I got a phone call, a fat envelope of sketches with extracts from the text, and a date for delivery. There may have been a few phone calls to clarify certain details, but that was all.

I must have done better than I thought. They asked me to work on *Dungeoneer* and *Blacksand!* afterwards.

Did you have any say in how the maps developed?
Apart from the information on the maps, I made it up as I went along, and assume the other illustrators did also. Essentially, the four main Titan maps describe the general setting in which authors placed their adventures in a fantasy world. The Titan maps showed you where the adventure was set, and the maps in the game books showed you what the area looked like.

I wanted to make the maps contrast and compliment the map styles in the *Fighting Fantasy* books. Historically, maps like these would have been compiled by cartographers from existing documents and commissioned for trade, political or military purposes. The adventure maps might have been drawn by someone on the ground and for a different purpose.

Can you recall what techniques and materials you used to produce your maps?
The black and white work was done on Daler artboard with Rapidograph pens, and the colour work on Daler line & wash artboard with Rotring pens and inks. On the colour maps sometimes I sometimes used an acetate overlay for the text.

Did you prefer the black and white or colour maps?
The black and white *Aadvanced Fighting Fantasy* work every time. I was out of my style with the colour work. Those drawings were very loose compared to the work I was producing in my day job. I prefer *Blacksand!* to *Titan*, and think *Dungeoneer* was the best of those three. They were all fun to do and satisfying.

The map for *Midnight Rogue* is dotted with numbers. Do you recall what the purpose of those was?
They identified buildings and locations in the game. There was obviously some confusion and I was under the impression that the key would be printed on the facing page. It would have read 1: The Black Lobster, and so on.

The *Midnight Rogue* map reproduces the map of Blacksand from *Titan*. Were you tempted to make modifications or improve the map?
It was a different map because it had a different purpose, and I didn't think of it in terms of mods or improvements. The way I thought of it was that *Midnight Rogue* was a self-contained game book and *Titan* was a primarily resource book. Another aspect was that *Midnight Rogue* was *Fighting Fantasy* and Titan was *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*, so there had to be some differences. Like the other maps in the game books, *Midnight Rogue* was an illustrated map and had to add some atmosphere rather than be a straightforward town plan. The map for *Midnight Rogue* didn't need to show individual buildings with any detail, while the map of Blacksand from *Titan* did.

By the time you did the maps for *Vault of the Vampire* and *Fangs of Fury*, they had Leo Hartas also doing colour maps. Did you feel the need to make your maps more interesting/ elaborate because of this "competition"?
There is always some kind of development going on. By that time I was getting a better idea of how the maps should look, and was adding a little more decoration and texture. I didn't see this as a competition – I guess you mean in a "creative professional" manner – between Leo and me.

I had been booking illustrators for advertising graphics since '74 so I had a good idea of what was happening. We have never met or been in touch in any way, which made it even more interesting for me. As a technical draftsman I needed to find a style that contrasted with Leo's and would give the reader a clear idea of where things were. Leo's illustration work showed the reader what the location looked like and set the atmosphere. I love Leo's landscape maps, they're the best. Probably. Dammit, he's nearly as good as John Blanche!

After *Fangs of Fury* you didn't do any further maps for the gamebooks. Was this a choice on your part?
I wasn't asked, but I think there were a few reasons for that. I was more involved with *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* and worked on *Dungeoneer* and *Blacksand!*; there were better illustrators available; and after that I got myself intentionally lost in Ireland for a year.

Which out of your *Fighting Fantasy* maps are you happiest with and why?
My favourite *Fighting Fantasy* map is Port Blacksand in *Midnight Rogue* because I love drawing street plans. From the *AFF* work I still like almost everything I did in *Dungeoneer* and Blacksand. Marc Gascoigne knew what I could do in black and white from my earlier work in *White Dwarf* and elsewhere. He gave me almost no instructions and it all came together on its own. My favourite map in linework is Port Blacksand. The most satisfying drawing would probably be the floor plan with the basilisk in *Dungeoneer*.

What made you suddenly renew your interest in *Fighting Fantasy* and specifically the maps?
Accidentally finding *Fighting Fantazine* got me started, and finding out that the game is still going strong and being developed has held my interest. Having work published is always a motivator and I like the idea of doing some more and making something that will be appreciated. If other fans get involved in the design process, that's even better. Making maps was part of my job for more than twenty years and during that time making music was a hobby. Now it's the other way round. The bottom line is that *Fighting Fantasy* is still a great game.

Steve Luxton now has his own blog at:
mrnibbsmaps.blogspot.com/

FF

ESCAPE FROM THE SORCERER

by Sunil Prasannan
Illustrated by Michael Wolmarans

INTRODUCTION

Before embarking on your adventure, you must first determine your own strengths and weaknesses. You use dice to determine your initial scores. On page 19 there is an *Adventure Sheet*, which you may use to record the details of your adventure. On it you will find boxes for recording the scores of your attributes. You are advised either to record your scores on the *Adventure Sheet* in pencil or to make photocopies of the sheet for use in future adventures.

Skill, Stamina and Luck

Roll one die. Add 6 to the number rolled and enter this total in the SKILL box on the *Adventure Sheet*.

Roll two dice. Add 12 to the number rolled and enter this total in the STAMINA box.

Roll one die. Add 6 to the number and enter this total in the LUCK box.

For reasons that will be explained below all your scores will change constantly during the adventure. You must keep an accurate record of these scores, and for this reason you are advised to write small in the boxes or to keep an eraser handy. But never rub out your *Initial* scores. Although you may be awarded additional SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK points, their totals may never exceed their *Initial* scores, except on those very rare occasions when the text specifically tells you so.

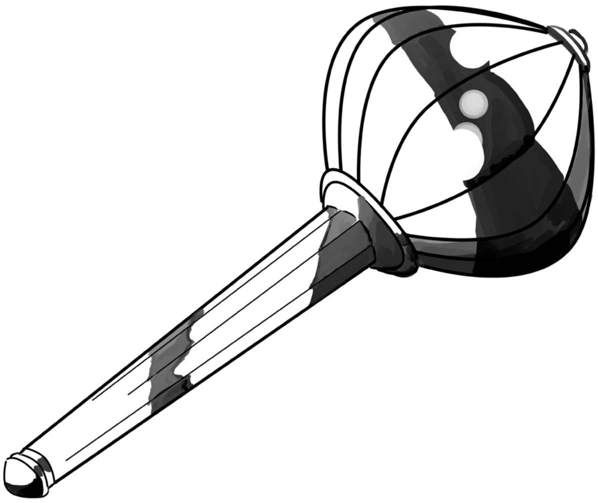
Your SKILL reflects your expertise in combat, your dexterity and agility. Your STAMINA score reflects how healthy and physically fit you are. Your LUCK score indicates how lucky you are.

Battles

During your adventure you will often encounter hostile creatures which will attack you, and you yourself may choose to draw your sword against an enemy you chance across. In some such situations you may be given special options allowing you to deal with the encounter in an unusual manner, but in most cases you will have to resolve battles as described below.

Enter your opponents SKILL and STAMINA scores on a spare sheet of paper. You should also make a note of any special abilities or instructions, which are unique to that particular opponent. Then follow this sequence:

1. Roll both dice for your opponent. Add its SKILL score to the total rolled, to find its Attack Strength.
2. Roll both dice for yourself, then add your current SKILL score to find your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is higher than your opponent's, you have wounded it: proceed to step 4. If your opponent's Attack Strength is higher than yours, it has wounded you: proceed to step 5. If both Attack Strength totals are the same, you have avoided or parried each other's blows: start a new Attack Round from step 1 above.
4. You have wounded your opponent, so subtract 2 points from its STAMINA score. You may use LUCK here to do additional damage (see below).
5. Your opponent has wounded you, so subtract 2 points from your STAMINA score. You may use LUCK to reduce the loss of STAMINA (see below).
6. Begin the next Attack Round, starting again at step 1. This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your opponent reaches zero, which means death. If your opponent dies, you are free to continue with your adventure. If you die, your adventure ends and you must start all over again by creating a new character.



Escaping

On some pages you may be given the option of running away from a battle should things be going badly for you. However, if you do run away, your opponent automatically gets in one wound on you (subtract 2 STAMINA points) as you flee. Note that you may use LUCK on this wound in the normal way (see below). You may only *Escape* if that option is specifically given to you on the page.

Fighting More Than One Opponent

In some situations you may find yourself facing more than one person or creature in combat. Sometimes you will treat them as a single opponent; sometimes you will be able to fight each in turn; and at other times you will have to fight them all at the same time! If they are treated as a single opponent, the combat is resolved normally. When you are instructed to fight your opponents one at a time, the combat is again resolved normally – except that once you defeat an enemy, the next steps forward to fight you! When you find yourself under attack from more than one opponent at the same time, each adversary will make a separate attack on you in the course of each Attack Round, but you can choose which one to fight. Attack your chosen target as in a normal battle. Against any additional opponents you throw for your Attack Strength in the normal way; if your Attack Strength is greater than your opponent's, in this instance you will not inflict any damage; you can regard it as if you have parried an incoming blow. If your Attack Strength is lower than your adversary's, however, you will be wounded in the normal way. Of course, you will have to settle the outcome against each additional adversary separately.

Weapons

You begin *Escape from the Sorcerer* with no weapon. As with other *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, your SKILL score reflects your combat ability with a weapon. So before you start off on your adventure, deduct 2 points from your SKILL score and note this "Starting SKILL". Do not, however, change your *Initial* SKILL as this is still used to determine the maximum SKILL you have, and is also used if you must make rolls against your SKILL. If you find a weapon (which you will be told in the text if you do) during the adventure, the text will tell you how many SKILL points the weapon allows you to add. These points are added to your "Starting SKILL" and not your *Initial* SKILL.

Luck

At various times during your adventure, either in battles or when you come across other situations in which you could be either Lucky or Unlucky (details of these are given in the relevant paragraphs), you may use LUCK to make the outcome more favourable to you. But beware! Using LUCK is a risky business and, if you are Unlucky, the results could be disastrous.

The procedure for *Testing your Luck* works as follows: roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky and the outcome will be in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky and will be penalized.

Each time you *Test your Luck*, you must subtract 1 point from your current LUCK score. Thus you will soon realize that, the more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky this procedure will become.

ESCAPE FROM THE SORCERER ADVENTURE SHEET

SKILL
INITIAL SKILL =
STARTING SKILL =

STAMINA
INITIAL STAMINA =

POSSESSIONS

LUCK
INITIAL LUCK =

PROVISIONS

Using Luck in Battles

In certain paragraphs you will be told to *Test your Luck*, and you will then find out the consequences of being Lucky or Unlucky. However, in battles, you always have the option of using your LUCK, either to inflict more serious damage on an opponent you have just wounded, or to minimize the effects of a wound you have just received.

If you have just wounded an opponent, you may *Test your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky you have inflicted a severe wound; deduct an extra 2 points from your opponent's STAMINA score. If you are Unlucky, however, your blow only scratches your opponent; and you deduct only 1 point from your opponent's STAMINA (i.e., instead of scoring the normal 2 points of damage, you now score only 1).

Whenever you yourself are wounded in combat, you may *Test your Luck* to try to minimize the wound. If you are Lucky, your opponent's blow only grazes you; deduct only 1 point from your STAMINA. If you are Unlucky, your wound is a serious one and you must deduct 1 extra STAMINA point (i.e., deduct a total of 3 points from your own STAMINA).

Remember: you must subtract 1 point from your LUCK score each time you *Test your Luck*.

More About Your Attributes

Skill

Your SKILL score will not change much during the course of your adventure. Occasionally, a paragraph may give instructions to increase or decrease your SKILL score, but it may not exceed its *Initial* value unless you are specifically instructed to the contrary.

At various times during your adventure, you will be told to *Test your Skill*. The procedure for this is exactly the same as that for *Testing your Luck*: roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your current SKILL score, you have succeeded in your test and the result will go in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current SKILL score, you will have failed the test and will have to suffer the consequences. However, unlike *Testing your Luck*, do not subtract 1 point from your SKILL each time you *Test your Skill*.

Stamina

Your STAMINA score will change a lot during your adventure. It will drop as a result of wounds gained through combat, or by falling foul of traps and pitfalls, and it will also drop after you perform any particularly arduous task. If your STAMINA score ever falls to zero, you have been killed and should stop reading the adventure immediately. Brave adventurers who wish to pursue their quest must roll up a new character and start all over again.

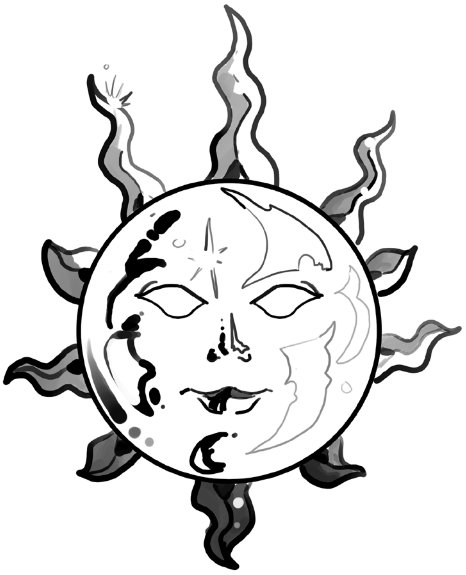
You can restore lost STAMINA by eating meals or Provisions. You start the game without any Provisions, but during your adventure you will be able to obtain meals. You must keep track of how many meals worth of Provisions you have left by filling in the details in the Provisions box of your *Adventure Sheet*. Each time you eat a meal you may restore up to 2 points of STAMINA, but you must remember to deduct 1 meal from your Provisions box. You may stop and eat Provisions at any time except when you are engaged in a battle.

Luck

Additions to your LUCK score may be awarded in the adventure when you have been particularly lucky or created your own luck by some action. Details are given, where appropriate, in the paragraphs of the book. Remember that, as with SKILL and STAMINA, your LUCK score may never exceed its *Initial* value.

Equipment and Gold

You begin your adventure with no equipment at all. Good luck!



BACKGROUND

The two kingdoms of Agra and Alkemis are in Southern Allansia, on the western shores of the body of water known as the Glimmering Sea.

They have had a history of border conflicts, sometimes involving the non-human species who live on both sides of the border: the Lion-Men, who are acolytes of Rogaar, the Lion God, and the Asuras, burly humanoids who are acolytes of the demon princes.

Agra has historically been the more aggressive of the two nations, once occupying Alkemis in its entirety during the War of the Wizards, when its rulers came under the influence of Chaos, with Lizard Men from Silur Cha to the northwest also joining in, while Alkemis stood alongside the Gods of Good. The Lion-Men were allied with Alkemis, but like their human friends, they suffered grievous losses, while the Asuras thrived, revelling in the breakdown of Good. After The War, the Kingdoms were at relative peace, but every now and again the Agrans attempted border incursions that were always repulsed by the Alkemisians, yet slowly but surely border areas inhabited by the Lion-Men were annexed by Agra, which gave no quarter to the magnificent beasts. There are also theories that severe rioting in Alkemis in the year 280 AC (After Chaos) in response to a hike in taxes was instigated by Agran agents.

This has been the situation for the last 310 years. None of Agra's rulers reached the pure depravity and evil of the Chaotic era, until just a few years ago. Historically, once the ruler of Agra died, his successor was always chosen by a duel if there were two main candidates, or an all out melee if there were several claimants to the throne. The contest of 299 AC was won by Grudar Kreshnel, a veteran of several campaigns against Alkemis, but he succeeded using rather unorthodox means, namely he had untapped the evil magic that had inspired his chaotic predecessors during the War of the Wizards, using the help of the Asura tribe. The Asuras themselves helped him defeat his three opponents, the latter having little defence against their ability to turn invisible.

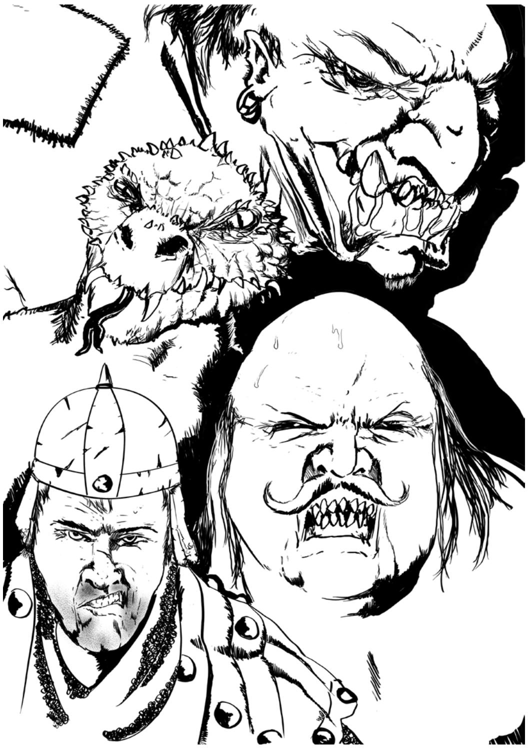
The Asura God, Artriv, is a fire-demon, and it was through his tutelage that Kreshnel ruled Agra with an iron fist, quickly becoming adept in the sorcerous arts. In order to weed out spies and dissidents and reassure the Asuras that he would need them for the duration of his campaign, Kreshnel and his most trusted lieutenants began to use only the Asura dialect (or "Asuran"). The language is not mutually intelligible with the modern Allansian dialects. Most of the Agran Army and populace still use the human tongue, though important documentation, incantations and military orders began to be written exclusively in Asuran.

Once Kreshnel had snuffed out any remaining opposition at home, and having become a full-blown sorcerer, he turned his attention to Alkemis, which hadn't been sitting idly by. The current Alkemisian king, Alburian, sent no less than four expeditions into Agran territory between 300 AC and the 302 AC, but they were all repulsed well short of the Agran capital, Agra City, the last expedition in 302 AC suffering a particularly gruesome fate after Kreshnel himself showered the Alkemisian troops with carefully disguised Death Grub-infested grain. The Agrans finally sent an armed incursion into the Alkemisian borderlands in 306 AC, but the Lion-Men soon put a stop to that. In retaliation, Kreshnel persecuted the Lion-Men in the territory under his control, while sending another more heavily armed invasion force into Alkemis in 310 AC.

This is where YOU come in. You are an officer in the Alkemisian army, with experience of the border war. Your unit was defending the town of Onyxas when the Agrans came. A crack unit of Asuras supported by Lizard Men from Silur Cha overwhelmed your comrades, and the town was captured. Most of the defenders and the civilian populace were put to the sword, but several dozen, including you, were spared, due to Kreshnel requiring "leverage" in his territorial dispute with King Alburian. In effect you became his hostages, as the Agrans ventured no further into Alkemis (though the Alkemisian capital, Alkemis City, is suffering a mysterious period of drought some say has been triggered by Kreshnel's magic).

Alburian was distraught at the loss of Onyxas, but refused to give in to Kreshnel's demands for more territory. Grudar Kreshnel, furious, began brutally executing your fellow prisoners one by one until a month after capture only you remain, possibly due to your status, but maybe due to chance more than anything! Overhearing conversations amongst the guards, methods used to despatch your comrades seemed to have included, but were not limited to, being used as fresh food for Giant Scorpions, sport for Asura hunting "parties," and various gruesome experiments involving novel magical weapons. And now the fateful morning of your own execution arrives. Two guards unlock your cell door and begin to manhandle you towards your doom!

Turn to paragraph **1**.



1

So this is it, you must escape your captors now, or you will surely share the fate of your compatriots. You are determined not to become another statistic in this interminable border conflict. The two guards are both armed with swords, while you are not, and your manacles further hinder you (you must reduce your SKILL score by 2 points until you can arm yourself with an Agran weapon). Yet your military background should enable you to at least put up some kind of resistance. Will you try to break free immediately, still within the confines of your cell (turn to **154**), or will you wait for a better opportunity (turn to **76**)?

2

You venture into the water. Before long you are wading up to your waist, but since the river doesn't get any deeper, you decide to press on. When you are halfway across, you suddenly hear movement in the water ahead, and two Crocodiles swim over and attack you. They are some ten feet long, with webbed feet and curious fin-like structures on their backs. You don't have time to wade across to the other side, but you may fight them one at a time. However, you must deduct 1 from your Attack Strength due to your awkward position in the water.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First CROCODILE	8	10
Second CROCODILE	7	9

If you defeat them, turn to **40**.

3

You search the guards' bodies. You find some bread (add 1 to your Provisions), and you then see that apart from the guards' bunks lining the northern and eastern walls, there is a desk and a bookcase in the north-east corner. No one else seems to be about, so you investigate. The bookcase contains mostly Asura works, but you discover that inside one book is a piece of parchment, which falls onto the floor as you flick through the pages. You pick up the parchment. It reads, "Siv amsa qsfq ocuq sjq arg makm qii ln qabe sav sger tqgxl an: 'Ig j qok aqs idg rata msxzre wyqa feimrt, luxz xio qsni va q sfq iv xdursa qs. Kas vlan emp si vcifxio qsz eccem fh, lxzfk iqe iort l urs aqs.'" There is a door in the eastern wall, through which you can leave the room. You enter a dimly lit passage heading east. You continue down the passage, which eventually becomes more brightly lit. Soon after, you come to a door in the south wall. It is not locked. Will you try to open this (turn to **164**), or continue eastwards (turn to **123**)?

4

The figure gives you his cryptic reply: "Don't be so sure of the mask that's impure." He doesn't move a muscle as he speaks, remaining seated as he watches you. Return to **80** to decide if this is good enough a clue as to how you should proceed.

5

You continue along the passage but hear a growling from up ahead that seems to be getting steadily closer. You freeze in panic, but you can grope along the wall and return to the door if you want to (turn to **172**). If instead you want to see what happens next, turn to **119**.

6

The door opens into a large, sparsely furnished chamber. You step inside cautiously. Unfortunately, you have disturbed the rest of three guards who were sleeping. They turn out to be massive – really massive – demonic Asuras, who jump up from their bunks and grab their weapons! You will have to fight them together, though your element of surprise enables you to add 1 to your Attack Strength for the first two Attack Rounds. However, the evil humanoids have the ability to become invisible, so every other Attack Round starting with the second, you must roll three dice, not two, to calculate their Attack Strengths!

	SKILL	STAMINA
First ASURA	8	10
Second ASURA	9	12
Third ASURA	9	11

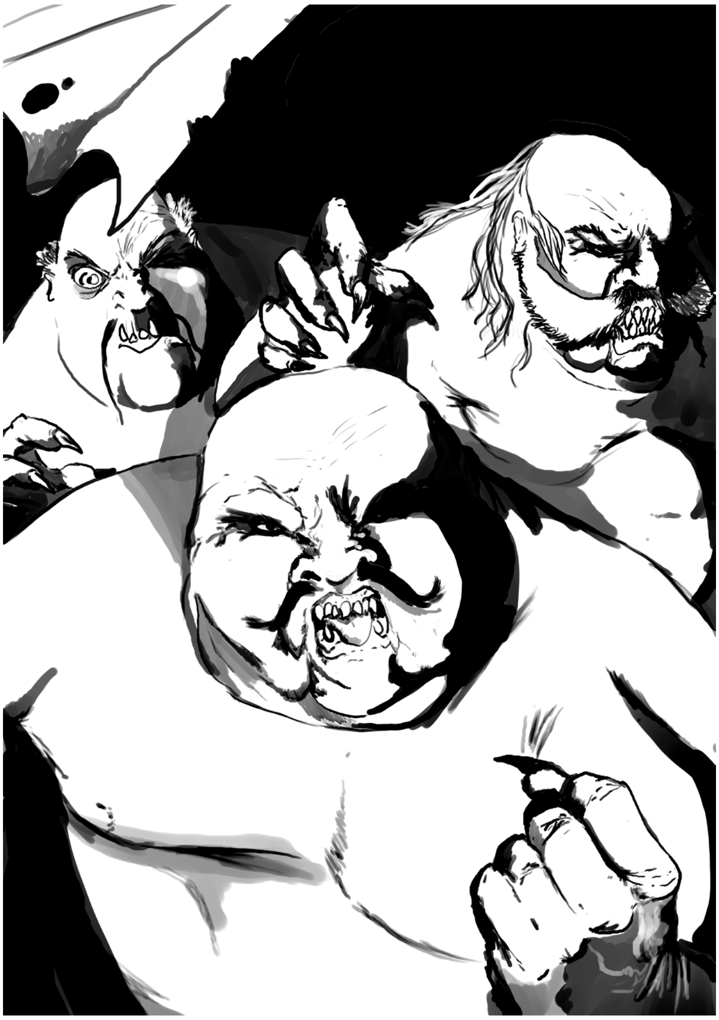
If you win, turn to **72**.

7

You open the door. All of a sudden, your heart leaps as a demonic Asura standing just inside the chamber beyond lifts up his mace and almost clips your scalp! You will have to fight him. He has the ability to become invisible, so every other Attack Round starting with the second, you must roll three dice, not two, to calculate his Attack Strength!

ASURA SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

If you win, turn to **115**.



8

You walk on down the passage, which continues north until it ends at a flight of stairs leading up for a considerable distance. You decide that you must ascend. You eventually find yourself back on level ground, in another passage leading north. You notice that the walls here are constructed not from bare rock, like the lower level, but from brickwork. This would suggest that you are above ground level, or at least pretty close. You continue north until you come across a door in the east wall. Will you open the door (turn to **167**), or continue down the passage (turn to **36**)?

9

You get to work alongside some apparently civilian workers, moulding swords out of molten metal. Your colleagues, engrossed in their craft, are too busy to notice you. With a thrill of horror you realise why they are so engrossed – on closer inspection, it turns out they are Zombies! Every single one is a decaying yet animated corpse! A heavily armed guard soon saunters up behind you and shouts at you, but you hesitate. The guard suddenly realizes that you are not a Zombie, but a sentient being, and raises the alarm. Several of his colleagues swiftly appear, and they immediately take out a pair of handcuffs and frog-march you to what appears to be a doorway in a secluded part of the factory! One of the guards calls out, "Foreman Daloy! We've got a live one!"

A dishevelled looking Lizard Man appears from the doorway, looks at you with contempt and grins malevolently. "Aha! The Alkemisians weren't all put to work here after all!" He fixes his gaze on you. “I am Daloy Cha, foreman of Grudar’s weapon, um, establishment, and I am sure you would like to join your countrymen in my service.” You realise that the Zombies were your fellow prisoners before they were put to death! Daloy places his hand on your head and mutters something in a language you are not familiar with, and your last memories are of the sheer terror and helplessness you feel as your will is drained from your body...

10

On top of the table, you see a large leather-bound book. This is in fact a magical Asura-Human dictionary, which through just a brief reading will allow you to understand both spoken and written Asura! This is how Asura has been encoded in this adventure. Firstly, All real consonants have been replaced by the preceding consonant in the alphabet (‘b’ becomes ‘z’, of course). Secondly, all real vowels have been replaced by the preceding vowel (‘a’ becomes ‘u’, of course). Thirdly, spaces between real words have been represented by the consonant after the last real consonant to have been used (such letters also end sentences). Lastly, spaces in the code are there purely to mislead. Remember to note down this reference number (**10**) for future reference. Add 2 LUCK points. Now you may search the cupboards if you have not already done so (turn to **53**), or leave by the door through which you entered and continue down the passage (turn to **152**).

11

You steer your little craft to the north of the island. You see that the island does indeed extend as a rocky column almost as high as the ceiling of the cavern, some fifty to sixty feet above you. Then you glance towards the northern shore and notice something unexpected. A stout wooden ladder can be seen fixed to the riverbank a few feet from the water, and it extends as far as the ceiling. Will you beach your boat in order to investigate the ladder (turn to **197**), or will you ignore it and continue your river voyage downstream (turn to **83**)?

12

Your choice, unfortunately, is a death mask. This type of mask is used by Grudar Kreshnel and his evil followers to obtain “volunteers” from among their prisoners for human sacrifices... As soon as you place it on your face, you get an overwhelming urge to lie on the table and drive your sword into your chest, dying a horribly painful death, yet with a beatific smile on your face.

13

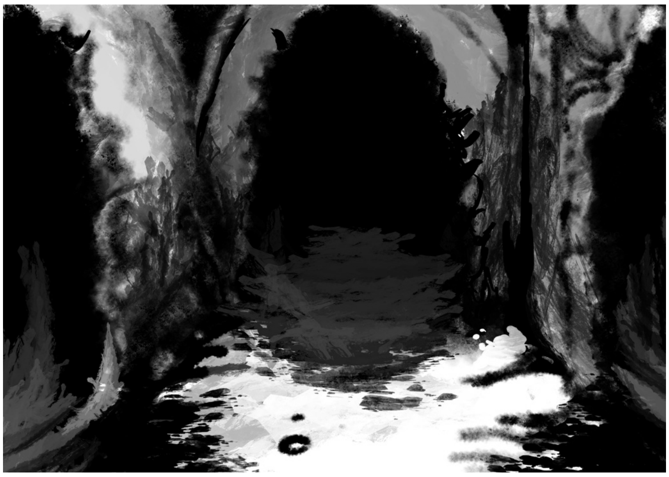
The light-creature seems to be asking you for some dice. If you have found some dice on your journey so far, will you give them to “her” (turn to **77**)? If you decide against it, or you haven’t found any dice, turn to **39**.

14

You press the button and wait. Nothings happens, but just as you are about to press the button again, the door swings open, allowing you to step forwards into a strange room! Turn to **133**.

15

The door opens into a long corridor at the end of which you can see daylight! But the guards behind you have by now entered the same corridor. You run as fast as your legs can carry you, and you see ahead that there is an exit to the outside world, though your way is blocked by another guard in front of you. You realise that if you were to fight him, he would delay you long enough for the others to catch up with you at last. Therefore you decide to merely knock him out of the way. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you are successful (turn to **129**). If you Unlucky, you painfully rebound off the guard’s chest, and you must fight him (turn to **35**).



16

You go through the arch into a passage heading east. Before long a high-pitched chattering noise can be heard ahead, and three tiny Chattermidgets come into view in the tunnel. They may be only the size of your forearm, but they are vicious blood-sucking humanoids. They chatter excitedly amongst themselves, having sensed your warm flesh! You must fight them all at once. The Chattermidgets may be diminutive, but their weapon is their bite, which is highly poisonous, causing dizziness and nausea. Every time they bite you, you must deduct 4 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First CHATTERMIDGET	4	5
Second CHATTERMIDGET	5	6
Third CHATTERMIDGET	4	4

If you win, you continue east along the passageway, until you get to a T-Junction. Suddenly, the way to the south is blocked off by a wooden portcullis dropping from the ceiling. This leaves you with no option but to head north (turn to **34**).

17

You reach the safety of the shore at last, clambering out onto dry land in one piece, and your equipment is safe too. You pause to offer the gods your thanks for your lucky escape. You also see that the river continues through the rapids for some distance. So there's no escaping Grudar's dungeon that way. You happened to land on the northern bank of the river. The cavern is much like the others that you have passed through, but with one important difference. There seems to be a wide ramped passageway heading north away from the river. With no other option, you decide to follow it uphill. After a gruelling climb, it eventually flattens out (turn to **195**).

18

The stew is very tasty indeed, and your plate is empty in seconds. Zildo has been looking on expectantly, and serves you another bowlful! Before long, you have consumed the entire vat of the chef's concoction! A truly massive belch escapes your throat and you pat your belly gratefully! "I hope the stew was to your satisfaction?" Zildo asks you.

"Of course, top notch nosh!" you reply. But there is still no sign of Ramdon Gorsay. "I wish Ramdon was here so I could tell him how good your cooking is," you continue.

But Zildo chuckles, "He is here, friend! He has been here all along." And then he suddenly calls out, "Ramdon! Come out!" You quickly feel a painful twinge in your stomach. And then another! Something is definitely not quite right here! You start to get up from your chair, but you double over onto the table, writhing in agony, and then a massive red stain appears across the torso of your tunic. You scream as you feel your stomach starting to rip open, and your last memories are of a bloodied Ramdon Gorsay emerging intact from your abdomen, laughing and gloating with Zildo Alli over your death...

19

Unfortunately, you are not careful enough in distributing your weight evenly across the floor, activating the deadly Darkstone Trap. You hear a click above you, and as soon as you look up, your skull is smashed by heavy rocks falling from a hidden panel in the ceiling. From her position of safety along the passage, Prettima shrieks and looks on in horror, as Grudar's trap claims another victim...

20

You head eastwards, but after a while, the passage gets darker and darker, the lanterns becoming fewer and farther between. You suspect something is not quite right here. Will you press on eastwards, regardless (turn to **61**), or turn around, and head back to the last junction to take the northerly direction (turn to **46**)?

21

Before you can do anything else, the demonic image fades to nothing! You catch your breath, scarcely believing what has just happened! Despite Artriv's searing heat, the cupboard appears intact, though a little singed. You must try and smash the cupboard door to prevent the evil Artriv ever having another chance to influence Agra's rulers, and indeed any other part of the physical world! Will you try a beam weapon (such as a Fireflash Staff or Zyborium), if you have one (turn to **33**), or will you try a smashing weapon (such as a Mace or Flashpowder), if you have one (turn to **59**)? If you have neither type of weapon, turn to **184**.

22

You head north. After a while, the passage bends round to the east, ending at a T-junction. You deduce that you would merely backtrack by turning to the south, so you decide to head north. After a short while you approach a small metal door ahead in the northern wall. You walk up to the door (turn to **99**).

23

The colour on Prettima's face drains as you ask her for yet more information. You sense that she has told you as much as she feels safe telling. You ask the Hobbit to join you in your quest, and she lightens up. Upon hearing about Malook, she tells you that she has to make her way to the prison cells to escort him out to safety and that you ought to continue alone, since waiting for them both would use up too much time. But she is willing to accompany you along the corridor as far as what she calls the Darkstone Trap. Prettima seems to be in a much fitter state now that she has your company. You chance asking her whether female Hobbits' feet are as hairy as male Hobbits', but she laughs off your question. You both go on up the passageway in fine spirits, but suddenly she grabs hold of your arm to signal to you to proceed no further. "Alkemisian! There's the trap I was talking about, just in front of us!" she cries. "It's the Darkstone Trap, big boulders dropping from a hidden chamber in the ceiling. Be careful!"

You see nothing untoward up ahead, but your curiosity aroused, you ask her urgently, "How is it activated?"

"It's triggered by weight. I suggest you crawl for the next ten metres or so."

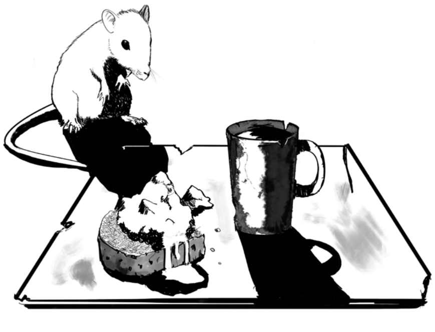
"But how do Kreshnel's minions avoid this trap during their patrols?" you ask, quizzically.

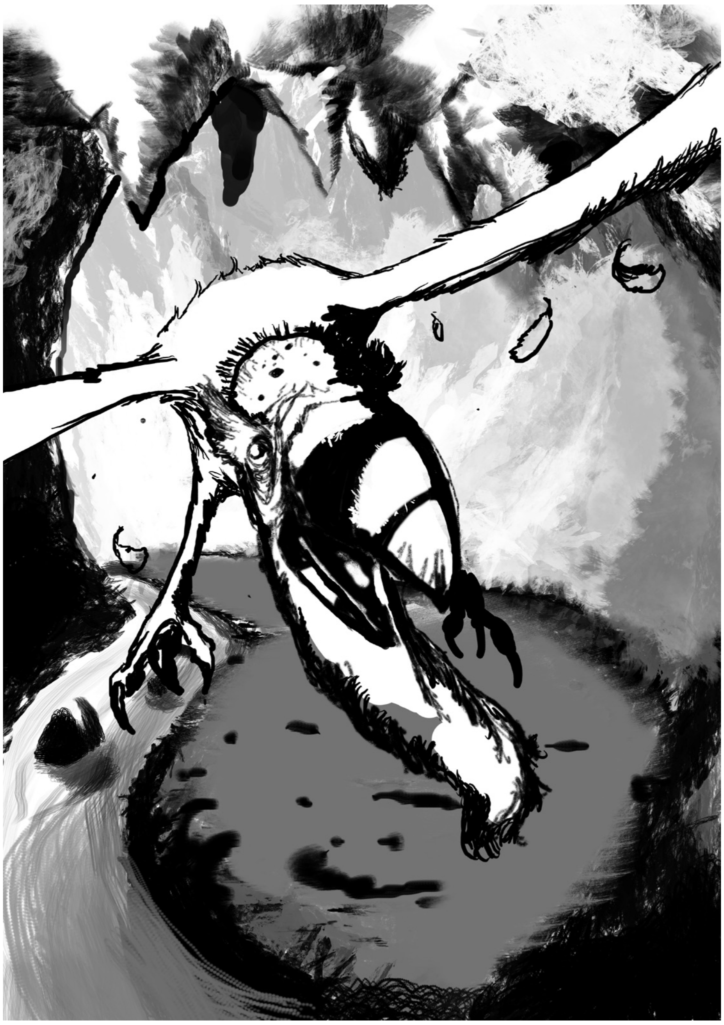
"I'm not sure, since it's been a while since I had any security clearance," the Hobbit replies, "But it is possible the trap knows the identity of whoever walks past it."

Not entirely encouraged by this, you go down on all fours to continue. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **74**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **19**.

24

Do you have a tube of Zyborium? If so, add 24 to the number you were told to note down when you found it, and turn to the paragraph with the same number as the result. If you have part of a Puflin's beak, turn to **161**. If you have neither of these items, turn to **63**.





25

The current takes you north-eastwards away from the cavern through a wide tunnel, which is lit by infrequent lanterns. Occasionally, you need to use the oar to prevent the craft heading too close to the banks, but the journey is uneventful until you enter another cavern, albeit much smaller than the previous one. You see that there is a large sack on the south-eastern shore, very close to the water's edge, though there are no exits on foot available to you. Perhaps more importantly, there don't seem to be any more crocodiles around. Will you bring the craft closer to the shore so you can investigate the sack (turn to **199**), or will you continue along the river without stopping (turn to **121**)?

26

You search the guards' bodies, and you find some bread, of which there is enough for 1 unit of Provisions. You then proceed down the passage. You approach a door in the southern wall. You see that this is partially open, and leads into a wide passage. Will you take the new passage (turn to **66**), or continue westwards (turn to **41**).

27

You have made it to a door of some importance. It seems to be made of thick metal, and there doesn't seem to be any lock. Do you know how to open it? If you know how to proceed, you know what you have to do. If you don't know how to open the door, you must turn to **70**.

28

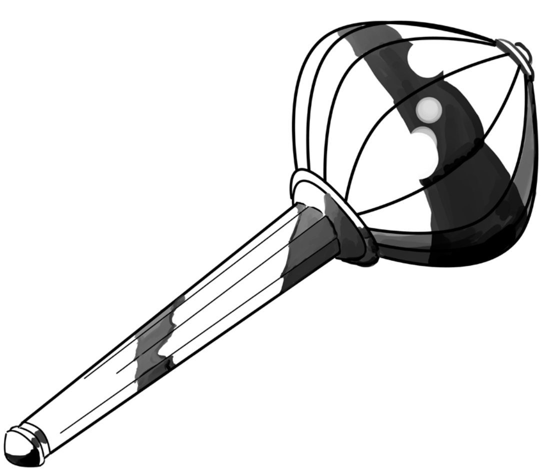
"Excellent! You will prove to be an excellent addition to the Agran Army!" exclaims Bho-bong. He goes back behind his desk, opens a long, wide drawer and produces a wooden staff. "This staff should be of great use. It's the Fireflash Staff, and as it name suggests, it can fire flashes of light at a simple mental command that can cause serious damage to any pesky Alkemisians you encounter. May you use your weapon wantonly!" The staff is about five feet long and is topped by a red crystal. It can be used once only during any combat against your opponent (or one specific target if you are fighting more than one opponent), if you win an Attack Round against him. If you obtain a hit, your opponent loses 6 STAMINA points! Add 1 LUCK point for your find, and remember the number "122", it will be useful later. You thank Bho-bong profusely, saluting him, and you leave the Human Resources Manager and his office by the door through which you entered and you continue northwards along the passage (turn to **54**).

29

You continue following the underground river southwards along the pathway. Both it and the river leave the cavern, entering a narrow tunnel. Lanterns are present here but are very few and far between. You are apparently heading upstream, as the river seems to be flowing in a northward direction at this stage, and with some speed. Just when you thought you had the tunnel all to yourself, you see ahead that some sort of large bird, with a wingspan of some 6 feet, is flying in the passageway. You quickly see that it is not a bird, but a Puflin, a hideous cross between a Puffin and a Wizard. Kreshnel produced this monstrosity when he experimented on ways to write his memoirs. The Puffin and the Wizard represented two publishers interested in releasing said memoirs. But Kreshnel didn't like their terms and conditions, so promptly crossed them using his dark magic, resulting in the Puflin you see before you! Anyway, you will have to fight it. Its colourful but massive beak will cause you 3 STAMINA points of injury. It will use this weapon every other Attack Round, starting with the first, while every alternate Attack Round it will use its magical powers to cast a fire spell at you. If you lose these Attack Rounds, the fireball it casts at you will inflict 4 STAMINA points of injury!

PUFLIN SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

If you win, you may sever part of the Puflin's razor-sharp beak to take with you. You then continue southwards, turn to 97.



30

Unfortunately, the door is made of extremely strong metal, and it proves too strong to force open. You have failed in your mission. But your disappointment doesn't last long, for the floor beneath you suddenly gives way, and you fall into a chamber full of large, upward pointing spikes...

31

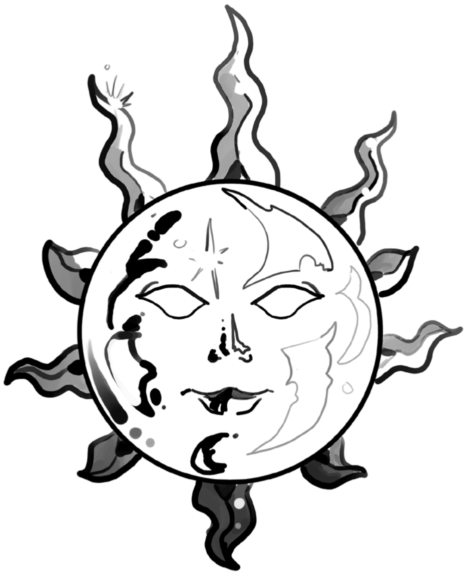
"Oh, that scum," the Hobbit says. "Well, I have met him myself. That sorcerer is an audacious man, all right. He is very strong physically, and always practises his magic on the prisoners if he isn't beating them up! But he hates anyone who crosses him. Apart from that, I think that Kreshnel is vulnerable to two weapons: a magic mace and a crystalline substance called Zyborium." If you have already asked two questions, turn to **23**. Otherwise, will you now ask her how to reach the sorcerer (turn to **127**), or how the Hobbit ended up in her predicament (turn to **145**)?

32

"But you must eat!" Zildo angrily shouts at you. You continue to refuse, making him even angrier. He then surprises you by calling out, "Ramdon! It's not working! Pull yourself together!" But Gorsay is not in the room! Or is he? Suddenly, the meat in your bowl rises into the air, coalescing as it does so, and then the vat shakes as the meat inside that vessel rises out of the stew to join that leaving your bowl. Within seconds, the meat has taken on the form of Ramdon! He grins malevolently as he re-appears in front of the stove. Then the awful truth sinks in: Zildo had actually fed you his colleague, who obviously has the ability to regenerate into his human form! "Zildo went to all that bloody trouble! Bloody ungrateful aren't you?" Ramdon berates you. The masterchefs then grab massive meat-cleavers from their worktop to take you on in battle! Fight them together.

	SKILL	STAMINA
ZILDO ALLI	8	9
RAMDON GORSAY	7	10

If you kill them both, you deduce that Ramdon will come back to life pretty soon. Will you search the kitchen and its adjoining room (turn to **140**), or do you think it better to beat a hasty exit by the door you entered and head northwards down the passage (turn to **22**)?



33

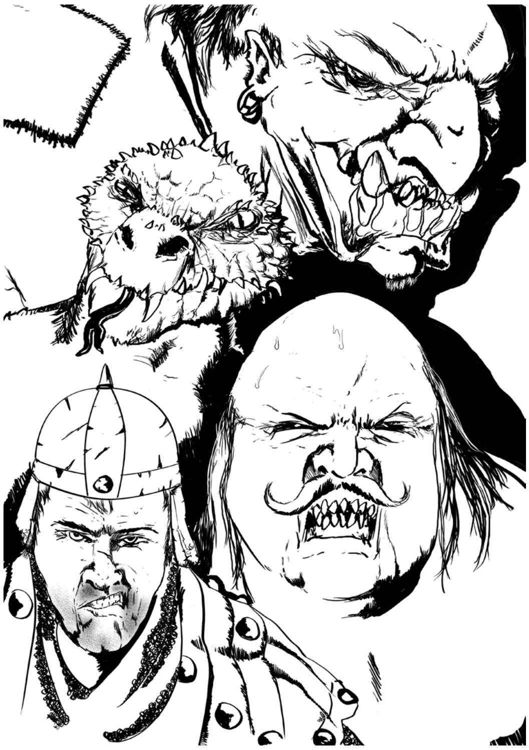
You send a powerful beam from the weapon at the door, but to no avail. It passes straight through without causing any damage at all! You momentarily fall to your knees dejected, but just then the door comes back to life, and Artriv's arms reach out to snatch you through the portal! You turn to run away, but it is too late! He easily catches you, and you shriek as your clothes catch fire. There is nothing you can do to prevent Artriv's flaming arms roasting you alive and snatching your soul to join both him and Grudar Kreshnel in the Netherworld forever…

34

As you begin to head north, you come face to face with four guards and a female Hobbit prisoner that they are escorting. The prisoner collapses into a jabbering heap on the floor, while the guards leap at you, swords drawn. Only one of them is human, the others consisting of a Troll, a Goblin and a diminutive Troglodyte. You must fight them all at once.

	SKILL	STAMINA
GOBLIN	6	7
GUARD	8	7
TROLL	8	8
TROGLODYTE	6	6

If you win, turn to **169**.



35

Unfortunately, even if you defeat the guard, he has delayed you just long enough for your pursuers to catch up with you at last. You are soon skewered by half a dozen spears...

36

The passageway continues north, and eventually leads you to a T-junction. A sign pointing east reads "Weapons factory this way". There is no sign for the westward branch. If you want to head east, turn to **186**. If you prefer to head west, turn to **138**.

37

You continue northwards until you reach a door ahead of you, your only way onward. You see that it is unlocked. You put your ear to the wooden door, but hear nothing. You may open the door (turn to **162**), or if you haven't already been that way, you may retrace your steps to the junction to head eastwards (turn to **118**).

38

The passage continues past the rock-face. Eventually, you come to a sharp bend where the passage turns to the east. Shortly after the bend you come to a door in the left-hand wall. You can ignore this and continue eastwards (turn to **51**), or try the handle of the door (turn to **125**).

39

"She" begins to glow much more brightly than before, and this is accompanied by a violent shaking. The shaft of light suddenly envelops you in "her" glow, and you feel much weaker than before. Roll one die and deduct the total from your STAMINA score. If you are still alive, the shaft reverts to "her" original size and brilliance, though "she" doesn't seem to be able or willing to open or pass through the door. Turn to **68**.

40

There seem to be no more aquatic adversaries lurking in the water, and you easily make it to the far bank. The small boat near the water's edge is barely ten feet long, but a quick inspection reveals that it is in reasonable condition, and there is also an oar available, which you find under the seat spanning the centre of the boat. You remember Malook's advice to you that it is best to head towards the north-eastern part of the dungeon complex, and it dawns on you that the river may provide an alternative means of escape from Grudar's dungeon! So, will you chance sailing in this boat down the river (**105**), or do you prefer to wade back over to the west bank and continue along the passage following the river (turn to **97**)?

41

The passage bends round to the north, and just past the bend, you come across what appears to be a guard, slumped unconscious against the western wall. He seems to be unarmed, so you investigate. Just as you crouch down above him, he wakes with a start. "Oh my goodness!" he exclaims as he sees you. "Please excuse my lapse of discipline!" He gets up to his full height. You tell him that you are not an Agran, and he relaxes – a little. "My name is Freddi, and I'm supposed to make an appointment to see Human Resources regarding joining Grudar Kreshnel's guards. Do you know where their office is?" You reply that you have no idea. Freddi apologises again and heads back down the passage, past the bend to head east. You decide to let him go. Turn to **131** to continue down the passage.

42

You continue down the passage, which proceeds in a northerly direction, widening out as it does so. You eventually come to a large room, the western and eastern walls lined with statues of various evil-looking warriors and also human skeletons. Although it is an unnerving sight - there must be a total of a dozen statues and skeletons - you decide there is no threat from the room. But before you are even halfway across, you see that this line of thinking was mistaken, for two of the statues and two of the skeletons creak their way off their plinths and stand in your way! Fight the four monsters together, but note that your sword can only inflict 1 STAMINA point of injury on your opponents, not the usual two.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First STATUE	8	8
Second STATUE	7	9
First SKELETON	7	7
Second SKELETON	7	6

If you win, you pause to make sure that no more enemies are animated before investigating the remains of your opponents, as well as the room itself. You find an ornate ruby amulet suspended from a chain around the neck of one of the intact skeletons. This has magical properties, enabling you to see the demonic Asuras when they become invisible. Therefore, for as long as you wear the amulet, each time you encounter an Asura, you can ignore any instructions telling you to alter the calculation of his Attack Strength during the battle. Add 1 LUCK point. You decide to carry on northwards, the room ending at an exit leading into another northerly tunnel (turn to **141**).

43

There is a short passage, which leads to a guardroom. You realise this when two human guards and a reptilian Lizard Man jump up from their bunks and grab their weapons. You must fight the guards, all at the same time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First GUARD	8	8
LIZARD MAN	9	9
Second GUARD	7	8

If you win, turn to **3**.

44

The mighty creature topples over backward into the river, causing a large volume of water to splash all over you and your boat! You quickly need to bail out the water as your boat is starting to founder! Have you found a bucket on your quest? If so, turn to **92**. If you don't have one, turn to **171**.

45

You eventually reach the top of the ladder. You see that there is no sign of an access through the ceiling, at least not an obvious one. But on closer inspection you discover the outline of what looks like a square manhole cover, which you can lever open with your sword. After a bit of effort, you manage to slide it aside, enabling you to climb up into a passageway heading north-south. The construction of the passage is different from those in the level below, being made of brick rather than roughly hewn rock. You deduce that you are above ground level, or at least very close to it. Thinking back to what your fellow prisoner Malook told you just after you escaped your cell, you decide that you would make much better headway by continuing in a northerly direction. You can follow the passageway northwards (turn to **98**), or if you think that the underground river would make a better escape route after all, you can make the long climb back down the ladder to your boat, and continue your voyage eastwards (turn to **83**).

46

You head north along the passage. Soon you come to a wooden door in the left-hand wall. The door doesn't appear to be locked. If you want to see what is behind the door, turn to **113**. If instead you wish to continue heading north down the passageway, turn to **71**.

47

You press the button and wait. Nothing happens. You press it again and wait. Suddenly, a bolt of white-hot energy blasts out of the wall to your right, striking you in the head and killing you instantly...

48

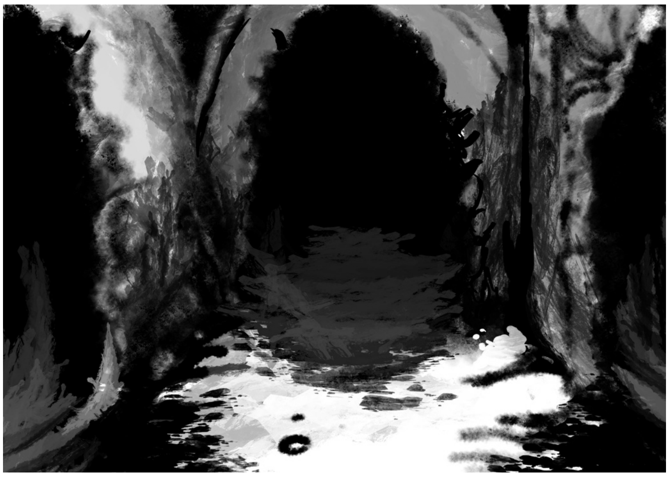
The arch leads into a hexagonal room, empty save for a solitary lantern hanging from the western wall to your left. A second arch leads out through the east wall to your right. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a powerfully loud growling voice can be heard: "Who is brave enough to face me?" You shiver in fright, not quite sure what to do. Will you stay put (turn to **153**), or take flight and race for the eastern arch (turn to **170**)?

49

After a short distance, you see that the passage turns to the northwest and leads to a large cavern bisected roughly north-south by the underground river. There is no way onward, the path ending at the riverbank. As you approach the river, the lantern-light does not seem to penetrate the dark water. You see that there is a small boat on the riverbank, very close to you, and you move towards it. Just then, you hear movement in the water in front of you, and two Crocodiles swim out of the water onto the riverbank to attack you! They are some ten feet long, with webbed feet and curious fin-like structures on their backs. You may fight them one at a time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First CROCODILE	8	10
Second CROCODILE	7	9

If you win, there seem to be no more aquatic adversaries lurking in the water, and you are free to approach the boat on the shoreline. The small craft is barely ten feet long, but a quick inspection reveals that it is in reasonable condition, and there is also an oar available, which you find under the seat spanning the centre of the boat. You remember Malook's advice to you that it is best to head towards the north-eastern part of the dungeon complex, and it dawns on you that the river may provide an alternative means of escape from Grudar's forces! So, with a certain degree of trepidation, yet a not insignificant amount of excitement, you decide to sail in this boat (turn to **105**).



50

Soon you come to another junction, but you must choose your next direction quickly, for the Agrans behind you are catching up with you fast! Will you continue straight ahead (turn to **101**), or turn right (turn to **177**)?

51

You continue along the passage, which heads eastwards for a considerable distance. Just when you think it is never-ending, you see what appears to be a cell door in the right-hand wall. Curious, since you thought you had departed the prison area a long time ago, you peer through the narrow door-grill and see a vertical shaft of greenish light, nearly your height, coming towards the door. "Human! Dice, please!" it seems to say, but in a weirdly ethereal, yet distinctly feminine voice. You stop in your tracks. The shaft of light continues to advance until 'she' stops about a foot behind the door. Will you talk back to 'her' (turn to **13**), or will you merely continue eastwards (turn to **39**)?

52

You head northwards. The passage turns to the east and then back to the north, and not long after the second bend, you find two caves in the rock-face to your left, one far larger than the other. The lantern-light from the passage doesn't penetrate far into either. Will you enter the larger cave to the south (turn to **107**), or the smaller one to the north (turn to **157**)? If you wish to enter neither, you may continue northwards. Turn to **38**.

53

There seems to be hardly anything useful in these cupboards. You find some food, namely half a loaf of bread and a handful of dried fruit, but nothing more. You may add 2 units to your rations. Then you may take a closer look at the items on the table if you haven't already (turn to **10**), or leave by the door through which you entered and continue down the passage (turn to **152**).

54

Continuing down the passageway, you find a wooden door in the east wall with a sign saying “Lu rjl qii ln” on it. There is no other way forward, as the passage finishes at a dead end, only a few feet beyond. The door is locked and made of thick wood. Will you still try to open the door (turn to **189**), or return to the junction and carry on southwards down the other branch in the passage, if you haven’t been down that way already (turn to **66**)? If you haven’t already done so, on the way back you may investigate the door in the west wall (turn to **93**).

55

You head south along the river, and after a short while you reach another junction offering you options to head east or continue south. However, you remember that your fellow prisoner Malook told you to head towards the northeast of the prison complex, and for this reason you decide that you shouldn’t head any further south. You turn left to head east, away from the river. Turn to **151**.

56

The door opens into a room, which appears to be an extensive kitchen, crammed full of various foodstuffs, with varying degrees of pungency. A large stove lies beneath a hearth at the far end of the kitchen, with a large vat of some exotic concoction or other bubbling away over the flame, and there is a large wooden table in the centre of the room. Work-tops and shelving line the walls to either side, though these are interrupted halfway along the right-hand wall to make way for an arch leading into a second chamber. Standing beside the table are two portly looking fellows dressed in what might have been white pinafores and chefs’ hats in better days, but which are now soiled with months or possibly years worth of cooking. These are none other than Zildo Alli and Ramdon Gorsay, Agra’s self-styled masterchefs, now in the employ of none other than Grudar Kreshnel! The burly Ramdon takes immediate issue with your presence in his trademark brusque fashion. “Who the bloody hell are you? Who gave you the right to bloody disturb our work!” Zildo, who seems slightly less annoyed, tells him, “Hang on, Ramdon! This might well be a taster for, ahem, our latest culinary masterpiece!” “Ah, you may be bloody right, Zildo!” replies Gorsay, exchanging a wink with his colleague, before he turns his ire back to you. “Well, are you willing to try our bloody cooking?” You may either reply that you are willing (turn to **146**), or you can quickly mutter some feeble excuse, and step back outside into the corridor to head north (turn to **22**).

57

The northerly passageway soon leads to a large door in the western wall, and an arch leading off to the north. There is nothing to indicate what might lie behind the door. You have a choice of going through the arch (turn to **48**), or trying the door (turn to **104**).

58

The guards are both dead. You are free to leave your cell, but your hands are still bound, and to your surprise and frustration, neither Agran has the key to your manacles! You venture out into the rock-hewn corridor, lined on both sides with several more cells, but you deduce that the fighting must have been loud, for you are confronted by three more guards! And these are all non-human, a Lizard Man and two Trolls. You bend down to pick up one of the dead Agrans’ swords, enabling you to put up slightly stiffer resistance (so restore 1 of your 2 lost SKILL points). They can scarcely disguise their contempt for you, and shout at you before drawing their own weapons. Now you must battle these guys all together.

	SKILL	STAMINA
LIZARD MAN	7	8
First TROLL	8	7
Second TROLL	7	9

If you win in twenty Attack Rounds or less, turn to **85**. If you are still fighting after twenty Attack Rounds, turn to **120**.

59

You target the door with your weapon, shattering it into pieces. The portal is destroyed. Artriv may never again influence his Asura followers or the Agran government to the extent he has done while Grudar Kreshnel was alive. Turn to **200**.

60

You subsequently approach another junction with a westerly passage. You pause to listen, but a sound very much like someone – or something – screaming in the distance puts you off from turning left here. You head on northwards past the junction, and after a short while you approach a small metal door ahead in the northern wall. You walk up to the door (turn to **99**).

61

The lanterns return to their normal frequency before long, allowing you to see ahead clearly, and the passage turns to the northeast, continuing in that direction for a while, before turning back to the east. However, you soon reach an obstacle. The passage ends at a fast-flowing river ahead, flowing through a tunnel heading roughly south to north. Luckily there is a pathway hewn into the side of the tunnel, following the river northwards, downstream. You have little choice but to follow this path. After a while, you finally reach a rock bridge spanning the river, with the path continuing northwards past it. Acting on a hunch, you decide to cross over. The bridge supports your weight easily, and you find yourself on the far bank, in an easterly passageway leading away from the subterranean river. You continue eastwards. Turn to **183**.

62

“The Fireflash staff!” he cries, his concentration broken. You send a powerful blast from the weapon at the sorcerer’s chest. However, Kreshnel parries the energy bolt with his sword, deflecting it straight back towards you! If you have a shield, you manage to protect yourself from the energy bolt. If not, you quickly hold up the staff in desperation, but cannot prevent the blast hitting you in your chest, causing you to shriek in pain – lose 6 STAMINA points, and if you are still alive, you also see that the staff is now broken and is quite useless (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). But Kreshnel decides not to continue his original incantation, lunging at you with his sword instead. Continue the battle from where you left off. If you win, turn to **193**.

63

The three-metre tall giant licks his lips in hungry anticipation as he looks at you. You shiver in fright. Before you can react, he hits you with his massive hand, sending you dazed to the floor. The giant lifts up his leg and brings his equally massive foot sharply onto your head. You will provide him with a hearty meal today! Your only consolation is that you are dead by the time he takes his first bite...

64

The guards are both dead. You are free to continue, but your hands are still bound, and to your surprise and frustration, neither of the Agrans has the key to your manacles! Moreover, you deduce that the fighting must have been loud, for you are confronted by three more guards! And these are all non-human, a Lizard Man and two Trolls. You bend down to pick up one of the dead Agrans' swords, enabling you to put up slightly stiffer resistance (so restore 1 of your 2 lost SKILL points). They can scarcely disguise their contempt for you, and they shout at you before drawing their own weapons. Now you must battle these guys all together.

	SKILL	STAMINA
LIZARD MAN	7	8
First TROLL	8	7
Second TROLL	7	9

If you win in twenty Attack Rounds or less, turn to **85**. If you are still fighting after twenty Attack Rounds, turn to **120**.

65

The westerly passage leads to a large wooden door, adorned by a sign in the Asuran tongue saying "Jesbg amp". A branch passage leads off to the north just in front of the door. Will you go try the door (turn to **56**), or will you instead head down the northerly passage (turn to **22**)?

66

The passage ends in a small room with a large table in the middle, covered in parchments. There is also a chest on the floor underneath it. Will you open the chest (turn to **198**) or investigate the table (turn to **159**)? Or will you head back to the previous junction and continue down the other passageway in a westerly direction (turn to **41**)?

67

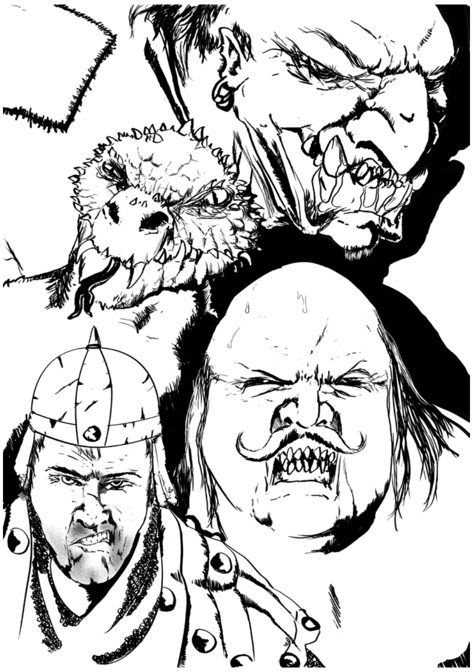
You enter what seems to be some kind of drinking room. Four guards are drunkenly playing dice at the table in the centre of the room. All four men turn to look at you as you stand in the doorway. This could be a tricky situation, but the men around the table seem to be expecting you. You decide that you had might as well sit down and see what happens next. Evidently, they are too drunk to notice that you are not a fellow Agran! They offer you a huge flagon of ale, which you gratefully accept (add 2 STAMINA points). After a good quarter of an hour trying to join the guards in some drunken renditions of Agran war-songs, the guards begin to enter their obligatory stupor. Will you stay to investigate the room (turn to **95**), or the guards themselves (turn to **147**)? Or will you just leave this room and then leave the first room via the door to the north (turn to **117**)?

68

Still unsure of what has just happened, you carry on eastwards, until you get to a large wooden door in the wall ahead of you. You can see a sign saying "Guard room" halfway up, which doesn't seem to be too promising, but your only option is to open it. You decide to investigate. You enter the room, surprising the three guards inside. This indeed seems to be a guardroom, and the Agrans can see that you are an infiltrator. They draw their weapons and take you on, but in the ensuing combat, you may add 1 to your Attack Strength for the first two Attack Rounds, as you have the initiative. Fight all three guards together.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First GUARD	8	8
Second GUARD	7	8
Third GUARD	7	7

If you win, turn to **84**.



69

Despite its disappearance just after you found it, the mask seems to confer upon you yet more beneficial effects. You may once again restore your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores to their Initial levels. Freshly invigorated, you have no hesitation in drawing your sword, and the battle begins with the powerful warlord-cum-sorcerer.

GRUDAR KRESHNEL SKILL 12 STAMINA 18

If you survive five attack rounds, turn to **128**.

70

The door is locked. You could try a Fireflash staff, if you have one, or some Zyborium if you have that (turn to **174**). If you don't have such a weapon, turn to **30**.

71

You continue northwards, but a before long a bat comes into view ahead, and it is flying straight towards you! *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, it does not hit you as it flies past. If you are Unlucky, it hits you in the face, and you must lose 2 STAMINA points, but it will still fly off. You brace yourself for more of the creatures, though none appear, leaving you free to continue along the tunnel (turn to **190**).

72

The last demon falls to the floor dead. You take a moment to survey the chamber where the battle took place. It is mostly taken up by the Asuras' bunks, but you find a small piece of parchment on a table next to the door. It is an Asuran inscription, reading “Siv inam p bgars vru xz imapa efgs vi map”. You may take this with you before returning the first room. You may then leave by the door in the north wall if you haven‘t already (turn to **114**), or by stepping back into the passage outside, before heading through the archway to the north (turn to **48**).

73

The passage turns to the east before ending in a large door in front of you. On the door is a sign merely saying “Watch your head!” You scratch your head quizzically wondering what this could mean. If you think it unwise to proceed, you may return to the previous junction to head north (turn to **57**). If you are curious as to what lies behind the door, you decide to turn the handle (turn to **155**).

74

You avoid the trap, standing upright once more when Prettima gives the all clear. The Hobbit decides that she has accompanied you far enough, and tells you that she has to go back in the direction of the prison cells to rescue Malook. Reluctantly, you agree. Prettima has been a mine of useful information, but for now, you are back on your own. Continue northwards by turning to **8**.

75

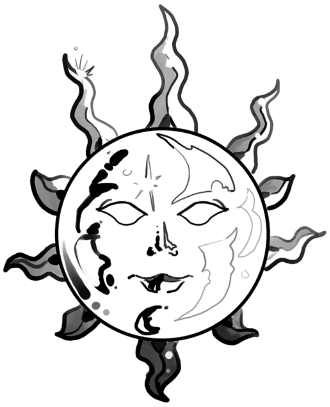
The river meanders away from the pathway for a short distance, and soon after, you approach a junction where a passage heads to the west, towards the river. Will you try this new passage (turn to **166**), or continue northwards (turn to **175**)?

76

The guards frog-march you out into the rock-hewn corridor, running north-south, and lined on both sides by several more cells. Now you decide to act, and you manage to take your guards by surprise. Breaking free from their clutches, you try to use your manacle-bound hands to knock a guard out. However, he is able to dodge your attack, and all you do is scrape your wrists painfully against the metal frame of the manacle as it hits the wall beyond him. You must deduct 1 STAMINA point. The guards draw their swords and you must fight them both at the same time. Remember to note your reduced SKILL score (ie. *Initial* minus 2) while resolving the battle!

	SKILL	STAMINA
First GUARD	7	6
Second GUARD	7	8

If you defeat both of the guards, turn to **64**.



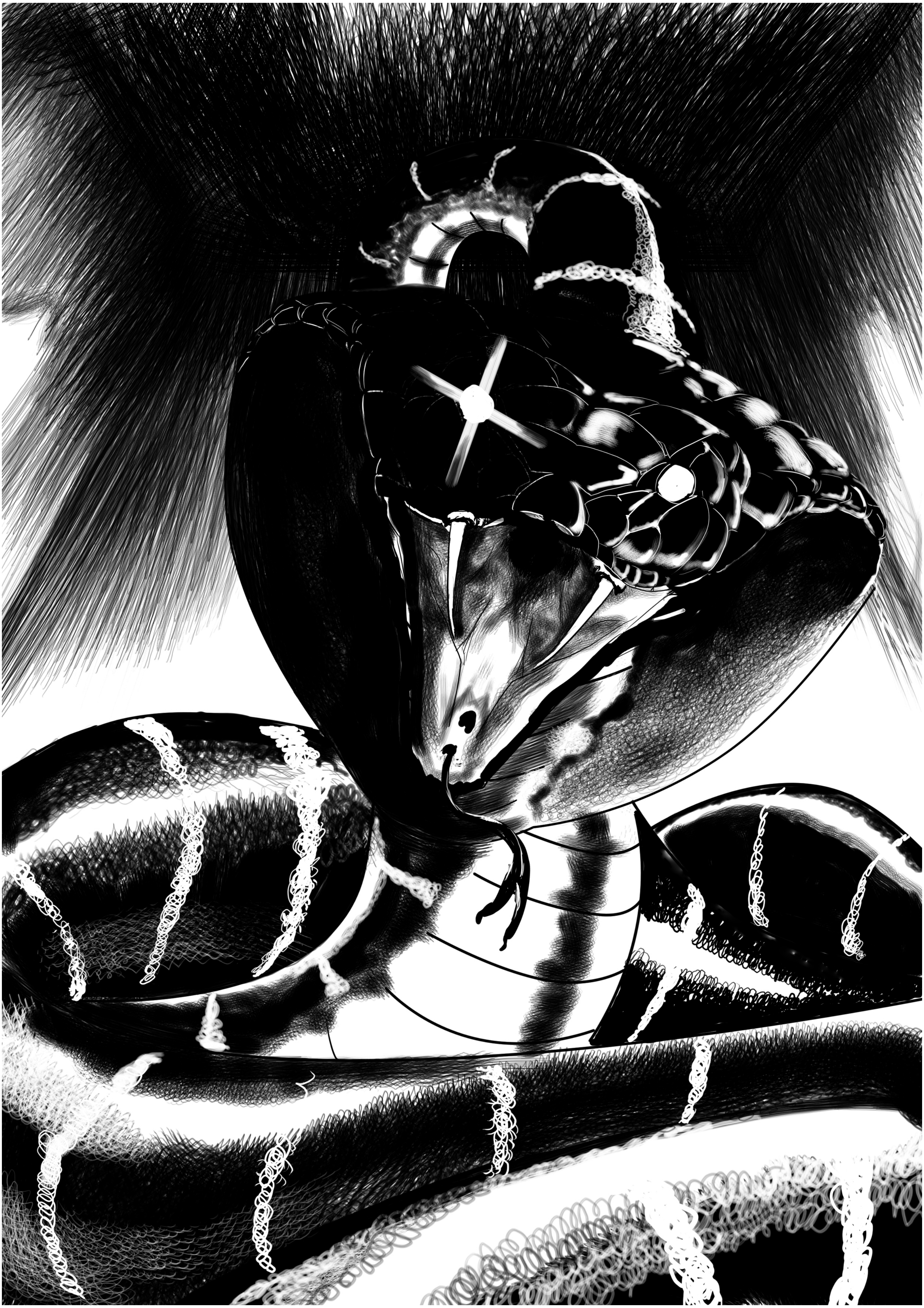
77

You open the door-grill to give the strange creature (if you can call her that) the dice, which disappear in the light! Deduct them from your *Adventure Sheet*. “Thank you, human,” she says. “Now Olerona has power, so Olerona is duty-bound to bestow power upon you!” The door opens as if by magic, enabling the light-creature to vacate it - it appears that her lack of dice was what confined her within the cell! Once out in the corridor, she then proceeds to travel full-circle around you.

You ask her, “Who are you? What are you?”

The light-creature replies in her weird speech, “I was once Grudar’s partner, and we were at one time engaged to be married. But we had our disagreements and after one heated argument, he used his dark magic to turn me into this shaft of light! My magic dice prevented him from destroying me completely, and it is those dice that are the key to my powers. So, Alkemisian, you are here to defeat him, yes? Olerona senses that you cannot speak the Asura tongue!”

You suddenly feel a weird throbbing in your head that subsides as quickly as it arose. The creature, whose name must be Olerona, has apparently given you the ability to understand both written and spoken Asura! This is how the language has been encoded in this adventure. Firstly, All real consonants have been replaced by the preceding consonant in the alphabet (‘b’ becomes ‘z’, of course). Secondly, all real vowels have been replaced by the preceding vowel (‘a’ becomes ‘u’, of course). Thirdly, spaces between real words have been represented by the consonant after the last real consonant to have been used (such letters also end sentences). Lastly, spaces in the code are there purely to mislead. Remember to note down this reference number (‘77’) for future reference. Add 2 LUCK points. You thank Olerona the light-creature profusely. “One more thing, Alkemisian. Wear not the bronze.” You ask her what she means but she begins to move off eastwards down the passage, at an extremely fast pace. Any way, you make a note of her warning. Now turn to **68**.



78

You open the door into a very high-ceilinged room. You realise the reason for the spacious accommodations when a huge, twenty-foot long Cobra rears its head, hissing menacingly and trying to bite you! Do you have a Giant Scorpion's claw? If so, turn immediately to **134**. If you don't have one, it is too late to beat a hasty retreat, so you will have to fight for your life! The Giant Cobra's bite is deadly, due to the sheer amount of venom its fangs will pump into your bloodstream. If you are bitten just once, you will die an agonizing death as the venom shuts down your muscles, heart and lungs!

GIANT COBRA	SKILL	10	STAMINA	16

If you win without being wounded, you find nothing of use inside the room, so you open a door on the far side of the immense corpse, which leads into a passage heading south, before arriving at a dead end. You try to search the wall in front of you for a secret switch, but it is your shuffling foot that triggers a floor-based mechanism that causes the wall to slide to the right, revealing what you deduce to be the T-junction where you earlier turned left to head west. You ignore the option to backtrack south, leaving the only real choice to head east, past the sign saying "Weapons factory this way". Turn to **186**.

79

The left-hand pan moves back to the left, but too far for the scales to be in balance. You hear an ominous click, and before you can do anything else, the door you entered by slams shut. You panic and step over to it in a desperate attempt to re-open it. Then you hear it - a hissing sound emanating from all around the room, and you see a purple gas filling the chamber. You realise that your next breaths will be your last, as the toxic fumes enter your lungs, causing you to cough and splutter. You begin to lose consciousness, and not long after, you slump lifeless to the floor...

80

Inside the room is a large, circular, stone table on which are arranged three masks, equally spaced. One, nearest you, appears to be made of gold, and in the shape of the sun. On the left-hand side of the table is a silver mask in the shape of the moon., while a circular mask made of bronze lies to the right side. However, you are not alone. A cloaked figure is sitting in a chair against the left-hand wall, his face uncovered enabling you to see that he is watching you intently. "Well, Alkemisian, you have made it thus far. Wearing one of these masks will result in certain death, one will give you the creeps, whilst the other will rejuvenate you. Choose wisely!" You could try wearing the gold mask in the shape of the sun (turn to **91**), the silver mask in the shape of the moon (turn to **106**), or the circular mask made of bronze (turn to **12**). You could, of course, ask your mysterious companion for his advice (turn to **4**). Or, if you prefer not to take any chances, you may continue on your way, the cloaked figure deciding not to stop you leaving (turn to **149**).

81

In fact, this is a weapon, namely a flashpowder parcel with a fuse. You may take this with you, as it is a potent weapon, but then again, it has the potential to be quite dangerous to its user. All you have to do to light the fuse is strike a stone or piece of metal with it, and the flashpowder parcel will escape the cylinder towards your target at high velocity. You may use it once only during any combat by *Testing your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you score a direct hit and all enemies present are killed or incapacitated. If you are Unlucky, you have missed and you will need to fight as normal. Return to **118** to make your next move.

82

The door opens into a guardroom, and there are no less than ten guards in this room alone. The half dozen chasing you quickly appear in the room you just left, blocking your way and sealing your fate. The sixteen Agrans make short work of you. Your gamble has failed...

83

You continue along the river in your boat, leaving the cavern and entering another easterly tunnel. Up ahead, you see that there is a series of rapids as the river descends several metres! You worry that your boat will not survive the passage through them. The river becomes choppier, and you have difficulty in steering the craft with your oar. You will need all your skill and luck to avoid being smashed against the myriad rocks marking the rapids. Add your current SKILL score to your current LUCK score. Roll a die three times and compare the total with your combined scores. If the total is equal to or less than you combined scores, turn to **122**. If the total is greater, turn to **108**.

84

When you have finished them off, you decide to investigate the chamber, which seems to be an armoury-cum-guard room. Since you already have a weapon, you decide not encumber yourself with another. You may instead take a shield with you. It is a rather small shield, circular in shape, but this will be useful in combat. If an enemy wins an Attack Round, roll a die. If you roll an even number, he will have hit your shield, and you lose no STAMINA points. However, if you face multiple opponents all at once, this bonus only applies to that enemy you choose to direct your own attack against at the start of each Attack Round. Nonetheless, you may add 1 LUCK point. The soldiers had 2 portions of Provisions that you may take with you before leaving the chamber via an archway opposite the door you entered by. Turn to **187**.

85

One of the dead Trolls has the key to your manacles, so you waste no time in unlocking yourself. You take his sword in its scabbard (you may now increase your SKILL to its *Initial* level). From all the guards you obtain a total of 4 food rations – a flask of water and bread, cheese, fruit and dried meat. These will each increase your STAMINA by 2 points and can be eaten any time except during combat. Which way now though? You take a moment to compose yourself. You don't know the Asura language, and getting out of the prison complex could be difficult. Will you ever see your home and family back in Alkemis again? You stop pondering the future and decide to concentrate on the here and now. You have just had a big stroke of luck in overpowering the guards. You survey the scene outside what has been your home for the last month. You see that there is a passage heading north-south between two lines of prison cells. Behind you, there are only a couple of cells before the passage ends. This leaves your only option to head northwards past the prison cells. No sign of life emanates from any of them. But just up ahead, you hear a muffled groan from a cell to your left and decide to investigate.

You see through the tiny window that the cell, which resembles your own, is inhabited by an old man in tattered rags. The guards you just vanquished had the key to this cell, and you decide to unlock the door and enter. You introduce yourself as an Alkemisian Officer from the Onyxas area. However the man replies, "I'm not Alkemisian, but I am actually an Agran dissident." You are intrigued by this, and he continues. "My name is Malook, and I was imprisoned for questioning Grudar Kreshnel's policies throughout the current border conflict. I cannot tell you much about the prison complex, but I can tell you that to escape you must head towards the northeastern corner of the complex, ascend to the upper level and then leave through Kreshnel's own personal quarters to the north. There are likely some traps and hidden doors to overcome, but I suggest that if you escape and defeat Grudar in the process that would surely end the war between Alkemis and Agra. Alternatively, there is the side entrance to the weapons factory to the east. Watch out for the demon-worshipping Asuras, as they have the ability to turn invisible and some even have the ability to shape-shift. Not everything is as it seems." Malook then goes on to say that he is in a bad way and he will only slow you down, so he decides to stay behind. But you promise him that you will be back to free him. The notion that your escape attempt now has a definite political and military element to it fills you with resolve. You take your leave of the Agran, close his cell door, but refrain from locking it, and then make your next move. Turn to **156**.

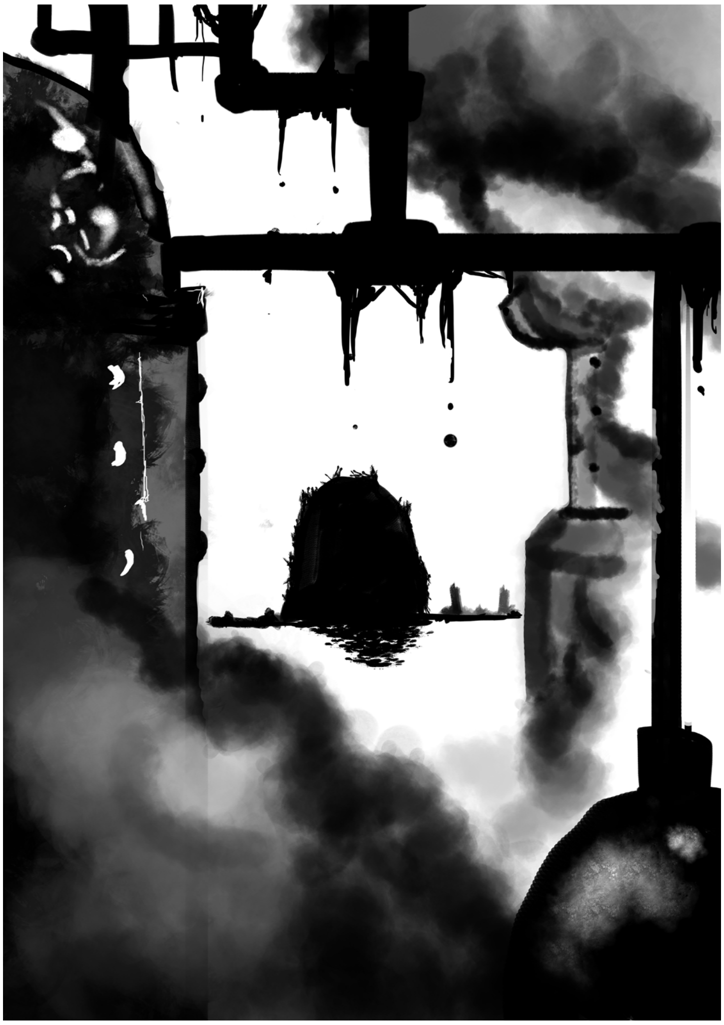
86

You are taking a serious gamble here. You creep across the floor of the factory, tiptoeing between furnaces and other foundry equipment, but the guards are plentiful. For now, however, they are more pre-occupied with watching over the workers. Looking over at the far wall of the factory, you spy the entrance to a tunnel heading in an easterly direction, which you decide must be the exit from the complex that Malook told you about. There's only one problem: the guards are at their most plentiful here! If you wish to reconsider, you can return to **195** and choose an option you haven't already tried. But if you are determined to get to the exit tunnel, you decide that you must try to avoid a fight due to the guards' distinctly superior numbers. Hiding behind a column holding up a furnace, you seize an opportune moment to make your move. You scream with sheer excitement as you race through the cordon of guards, pushing two or three to the floor, and run off along the passageway leading away from the factory. The Agrans are taken almost completely by surprise by your move, but they quickly compose themselves. About half a dozen chase you along the corridor you are now in, and they are gaining fast. Several times you bump into workers happening to pass along, and you are afraid that you may get tripped up. *Test your Luck*. If you are Unlucky, you eventually do get tripped up, and you are the easy target for six spears...

If you are Lucky, then you manage to keep up the pace, and you soon come to a junction where you have to quickly decide whether to turn north into another corridor (turn to **50**), or keep straight on east (turn to **165**)?

87

The bridge starts to collapse when you are barely halfway across. You lose your balance and fall headlong into the river along with the wreckage of the bridge. Badly injured by several collisions with the wreckage, you are easy meat for the crocodiles infesting this stretch of the river...



88

The guard who you thought had been knocked out regains consciousness, and although a bit groggy, nonetheless joins the fray. However, he cannot challenge you until the other guard has been overcome. His scores are:

Second GUARD	SKILL	6	STAMINA	6

If you manage to defeat both guards, turn to **58**.

89

You approach a junction where a passage joins yours from the east. You may continue along the course of the river downstream via the passage heading towards the north (turn to **75**), or follow the other to the east, away from the river (turn to **151**).

90

You run through the exit and find yourself in a long corridor at the end of which you can see daylight! But by now, the Agrans behind you have entered the same corridor. You run as fast as your legs can carry you, and you see ahead that there is an exit to the outside world, though your way is blocked by another guard in front of you. You realise that if you were to fight him, he would delay you long enough for the others to catch up with you at last. You will have to try to knock him out of the way. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you are successful (turn to **129**). If you are Unlucky, you painfully rebound off the guard's chest, and you must fight him (turn to **35**).

91

The mask is a sun mask fashioned in honour of the sun-goddess Glantanka, and as you put it on, you feel a surge of energy coursing through you. Although it is not visible to you, if someone were with you in the chamber, they would see that your whole body is glowing! But just as you revel in your newfound power, all three masks including the sun mask vanish into thin air, as does the mysterious cloaked figure! Although you have stopped glowing, the mask's energy bonus is real enough. You may restore your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores to their *Initial* values! Mystified, you continue on your way (turn to **149**).

92

You use the bucket to bail out your small craft, and before long the water is almost all gone. Relieved, you continue drifting along the river, which meanders in a more easterly direction. You see up ahead that the river divides as it passes a rather wide island, at the centre of another cavern. The island is sheer sided and it will be difficult to investigate, as it extends almost as high as the ceiling of the cavern. So you must decide whether to steer your craft to the north of the island (turn to **11**), or to the south (turn to **132**).

93

The door opens into a dark room, without any light sources at all, save for the meagre light from the passageway outside. You can tell that the room is quite large. You step gingerly forward, but when you are about halfway across, a lantern switches on above you as if by magic. Now you can see that the room has brightly painted murals on the walls, depicting various lethal-looking weapons, and battle scenes, too. For the very first time since your imprisonment, you see a plush carpet on the floor, mauve in colour. There is a table against the right wall, and sitting at a table at the far end is an old man, dressed in flowing green and mauve robes. When he sees you, he smiles at you and gets up. "Well! You must be the applicant Grudar was talking about. I am Bho-Bong, His Excellency's Human Resources Manager. Er, you are the applicant aren't you?" he asks, apparently not recognising you as an Alkemisian. Will you play the part of this 'applicant', and tell him (falsely, of course!) that you wish to serve the Sorcerer (turn to **144**), draw your sword and threaten him (turn to **180**), or apologise and quickly leave, and continue down the passage instead (turn to **54**)?

94

The passage leads to a large room. There are no other exits, and it is empty, except for a wooden shelf halfway up the opposite wall with rows of what look like small potion bottles. Intrigued, you enter to take a closer look. You see that the potions come in three different colours. A blue potion is labelled "Strength Potion," and one bottle has enough for two doses, each of which can restore up to 4 STAMINA points, though you may not drink it during combat. A red potion is labelled "Skill Potion," and again each bottle has enough for two doses, each of which is enough to increase your Attack Strength by 2 points for the duration of a combat. Finally, there is a green potion labelled "Luck Potion," which also contains enough for two doses, each one enabling you to restore your LUCK score to its *Initial* level. You can take up to three bottles of any combination of the different types of potion (for example, you may take one bottle of each of the three concoctions, or you may prefer two bottles of Skill Potion and one of Strength, and so on). Without any other way forward, you then return to the previous junction to head north (turn to **52**).

95

There is a low-lying cupboard along the far wall, and when you open it you get a pleasant surprise. It happens to be full of beer! You cannot carry too much but you may take up to three bottles, each of which will count towards 1 unit of Provisions. Now, you may search the unconscious guards themselves (turn to **147**), or leave via the first room and head through the door in its north wall (turn to **117**).

96

The door opens into a passageway heading east, which turns to the southeast and continues in that direction for a while before turning back to the east. A short distance further, you encounter an obstacle. The passage ends at a fast-flowing river ahead, flowing through a tunnel heading roughly south to north. Luckily there is a pathway hewn into the side of the tunnel, following the river southwards, upstream. You have little choice but to follow this path. After a while, you finally reach a rock bridge spanning the river, with the path continuing southwards past it. Acting on a hunch, you decide to cross over. The bridge supports your weight easily, and you find yourself on the far bank, in an easterly passageway leading away from the subterranean river. You continue eastwards. Turn to **183**.

97

You head south along the river and before long reach a rickety wooden bridge spanning the gushing water. The bridge seems to be in a state of disrepair, with many beams rotten or even missing. If you decide against continuing over the bridge, you can return to where you were earlier in order to try the water (turn to **2**). If you want to cross the river here regardless, you must *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **168**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **87**. If you have already been across this bridge, you must add 1 to your dice roll and compare the modified total with your LUCK score!

98

Your continue cautiously along the northerly passage, and then you come across a junction where you may head east or north. A sign points east and says, "Weapons Factory this way." You think back to what your fellow prisoner Malook told you. So, will you go east (turn to **195**), or north (turn to **130**)?

99

You try the door handle, but it seems not to budge. You then notice two buttons beside the door, each a little more than six inches wide, level with the handle. The one to the left is circular and has a white arrow pointing up on a black background. The other is square and has a black circle on a white background. You recognise the arrow as the Rune of Good, symbolising the path of righteousness, while the circle you deduce is the Rune of Chaos, paradoxically symbolising all things and yet nothing. Well, one of them must open the door,

but which do you think would Grudar's followers press to gain entry? Will you try the arrow button (turn to **47**), or the circle button (turn to **14**)?

100

Unfortunately, another posse of guards approaches from up the corridor, and you are surrounded. The guards advance upon you, and you resign yourself to your fate. But they have a far more sadistic way of finishing you off. They each grab one of your arms or legs and proceed to carry you off down the passageway. After what seems like an eternity, you are brought to a large, airy chamber bisected by a huge chasm. You acutely realise what your captors have in store for you, as they begin swinging you and to and fro near the edge of the chasm, before flinging you to your doom...

101

You continue your escape attempt without even pausing to catch your breath. The guards are by now almost upon you, and you see that the corridor ends at a wooden door in the wall in front of you, with another door in the wall to your left. You must quickly decide whether to open the left door (turn to **124**), or the door in front of you (turn to **15**).

102

You hold up the Zyborium before him. "What...? No...! Give it to me! Now!" screams Kreshnel. You bring it nearer his face. The tube comes to life. The sorcerer shrieks in pain as he is hit by the blast of energy, whereupon you nip in and cut him down in an instant. It appears he was particularly affected by the crystal! Turn to **193**.

103

You recite the rhyme, remembering to be careful with your intonation. The door opens as if by magic, enabling you to step inside and survey the scene. You have just entered a large, sparsely furnished room. And there he is, standing in the middle of the room in his mystic jim-jams topped by full regalia: the Agran Warlord, Grudar Kreshnel himself! "So, this must be the Alkemisian counter-strike against the might of the Agran Empire that I've been anticipating!" he laughs, mockingly. "So, prisoner, you have managed to get inside my quarters, but will you be able to leave?" Your hand goes for the hilt of your sword. "You're not going to win this war!" you reply defiantly. "Oh, yes we are!" he shouts. "Oh, no you're not!" you maintain, this time drawing your weapon. "Oh, yes we are!" Kreshnel counters, before clicking his fingers, summoning four guards from a room adjoining this one. Four guards, a mean-looking Human, a warty, drooling Troll, a reptilian Lizard Man and a burly Asura are ranged against you. This is going to be tough! Fortunately, they decide to take you on one at a time. Remember that the Asura has the ability to become invisible, so every other Attack Round while you take him on, starting with the second, roll three dice instead of the normal two to calculate his Attack Strength

	SKILL	STAMINA
GUARD	7	8
LIZARD MAN	8	10
TROLL	9	7
ASURA	9	8

If you win, turn to **110**.

104

The door opens into a room, which turns out to be completely empty. But there is another door in the western wall, and another in the northern wall. If you would like to open the west door, turn to **6**. If you prefer the north door, turn to **114**. Or will you step back into the passage and head through the north-facing arch (turn to **48**)?

105

You manage to push the boat into the water, and before long you are aboard, using the oar to steer. The cavern appears to form a bend in the river, with the water flowing away in a north-easterly direction, and flowing in from the south. Will you attempt to use the oar to steer your craft upstream, southwards (turn to **192**), or let the current to do the bulk of the work for you and let it take you downstream, north-eastwards (turn to **25**)?

106

The mask is a moon mask of a type used by Grudar Kreshnel and his followers to instil fear into their captives. When you put it on, it sends various fearsome images of death, decay and disease into your mind. You get the distinct feeling that your skin is peeling off and your flesh is dropping from your bones! You lose 1 LUCK point, and you must also deduct 1 from your Attack Strength for your next battle only. Just as you recover from this shock, all three masks, including the moon mask, vanish into thin air, as does the mysterious cloaked figure! Mystified, you decide to make your next move. Turn to **149**.

107

You enter the large cave. It is very cool and dark inside. Suddenly, you hear a loud growling just ahead of you! It scares you stiff for a moment, as you can see barely two or three feet in front of you. Will you leave and enter the small cave (turn to **157**), continue along the passage northwards (turn to **38**), or will you risk venturing further into this cave (turn to **148**)?

108

Unfortunately, your course takes you directly onto the rocks, and your boat is smashed to pieces. You end up being thrown into the foaming water. Lose 4 STAMINA points for your injuries. Luckily, you are not far from the shore of the cavern you find yourself in. But you must fight the raging torrent in order to make it to safety. Roll two dice and compare the total with your Current STAMINA score. If the total is less than or equal to your STAMINA, turn to **17**. If, however, you roll greater than your STMAINA, you drown, the river carrying your body to oblivion…

109

You have chosen the correct option. The scales are now in perfect equilibrium, and the movement has triggered a mechanism that opens up part of the northern wall, which rumbles aside to reveal a secret passage. You venture forward and head northwards along the narrow tunnel until you reach another door in front of you. It is made of metal, but unlike the door to the scales room, it is quite a massive affair, and there is neither a lock nor a handle. There is simply an Asura inscription halfway up saying "Mipo muo sg iq era cfa msqx z". You have a feeling you are getting close to your goal. Turn to **27**.

110

Grudar's mouth opens in amazement as the last of his henchmen falls. But he regains his composure quickly. "So, you think you are all-conquering, do you?" sneers the sorcerer. "I have a little surprise for you, Alkemisian!"

A fifth guard now ventures into Kreshnel's chamber. And one that it is strangely familiar – it is none other than your fellow prisoner Malook! You gape in amazement at seeing him fully clothed in Agran livery after having seen him in virtual rags downstairs in the dungeon. "Prisoner! You thought I was on your side, didn't you?" Malook grins, "But did I not tell you: not everything is as it seems? You have done well to get this far! You are a credit to your country, and Master Grudar was correct in surmising that you would be able to enter this room."

The sorcerer continues, "Alkemisian! No harsh feelings, as I was quite amazed to see you overcome all my traps and puzzles, and the odd incompetent from amongst my guards, but we really need to eliminate you once and for all!"

Then something terrible happens. Malook begins to transform into a hideous Asura, as his uniform rips apart to reveal his true self, with a bulky torso and sneeringly evil features! "And now for a further surprise, Alkemisian! I love surprises, don't you, Master?" Malook chuckles.

He returns to the back room and re-enters Grudar's chamber with another familiar face: Prettima! She, in good faith, had gone back to escort Malook out, but the sheer terror and bewilderment on her face tells you that she had as little clue as you did as to his real identity. Inevitably, Prettima's fate is sealed. Before you can do more than twitch, the wicked Asura draws his sword and thrusts it deep into the Hobbit's belly. She utters a brief, agonised squeal, before her bloodied corpse collapses to the floor. Grudar laughs maniacally, "Excellent, Malook! Excellent!"

And now it appears you're next. With his master looking on approvingly, Malook advances on you, Prettima's blood dripping off his sword. Like all his demonic clan, he has the power to become invisible, so every other Attack Round starting with the second, you must roll three dice to calculate his Attack Strength!

MALOOK-ASURA SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

If you defeat the shapeshifting demon, turn to **150**.

111

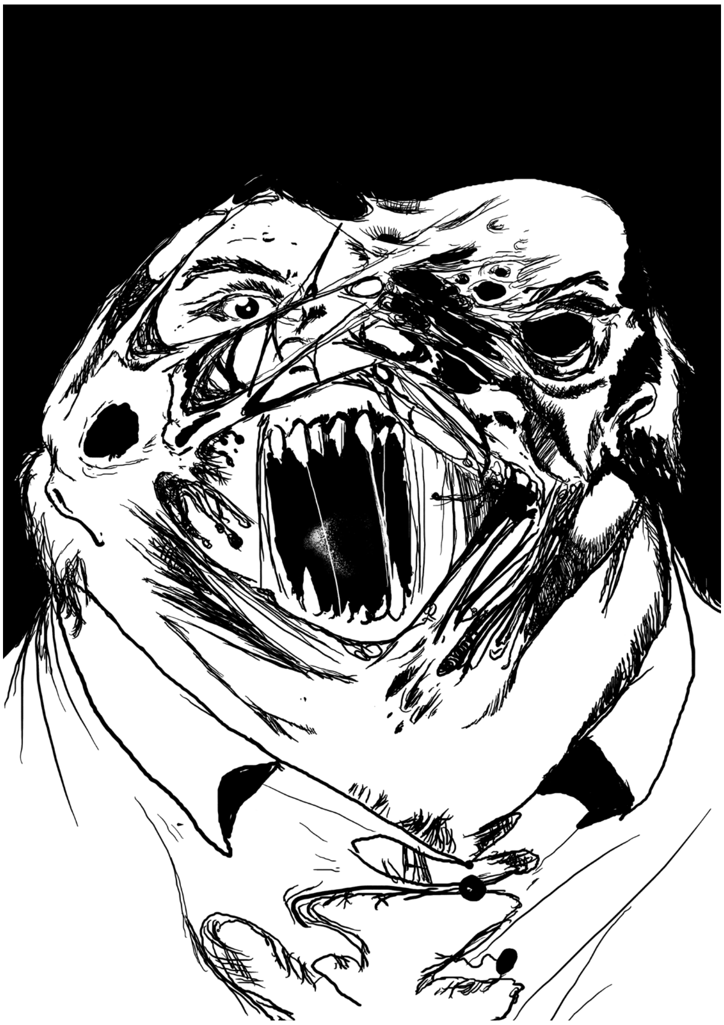
You draw your sword, and the battle begins with the powerful warlord-cum-sorcerer.

GRUDAR KRESHNEL SKILL 12 STAMINA 18

If you survive five attack rounds, turn to **128**.

112

You manage to get across the bridge unscathed, though a loose beam starts creaking and falls away into the river just as you reach the western bank! Relieved, you find yourself in a pathway that follows the river northwards through a tunnel, your only means of making headway. You continue north. You are apparently heading downstream, as the river seems to be flowing in a northward direction at this stage, and with some speed. Just when you thought you had the tunnel all to yourself, you see ahead that some sort of large bird, with a wingspan of some six feet, is flying in the passageway. You quickly see that it is not a bird, but a Puflin, a hideous cross between a Puffin and a Wizard. Kreshnel produced this monstrosity when he experimented on ways to write his memoirs. The Puffin and the Wizard represented two publishers interested in releasing said memoirs. But Kreshnel didn't like their terms and conditions, so promptly crossed them using his dark magic, resulting in the Puflin you see before you! Anyway, you will have to fight it. Its colourful but massive beak will cause you 3 STAMINA points of injury. It will use this weapon every other Attack Round, starting with the first, while every alternate Attack Round it will use its magical powers to cast a fire spell at you. If you lose these Attack Rounds, the fireball it casts at you will inflict 4 STAMINA points of injury!



PUFLIN SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

If you win, you may sever part of the Puflin's razor-sharp beak to take with you. You then continue northwards, and before long the path leads you to a large cavern bisected roughly north-south by the underground river. The far side is visible and seems to be no more than a few dozen yards away. But as you approach the river, the lantern-light does not seem to penetrate the dark water. You feel that the only options open to you are either to test the water to see how deep it is (turn to **2**), or to turn back and head southwards to the bridge (turn to **97**).

113

The room is a rather small affair, lit by a single lantern above the door, with roughly hewn walls, and only a wooden table within it. You see that there is a metal ring upon the table, and you chance putting it on your finger. You have just acquired a Ring of Distraction, which enables you to deduct 1 from the Attack Strengths of any enemies you face in combat. Add 1 LUCK point. Now, you need to make your next move. You leave the room and continue northwards (turn to **71**).

114

The door opens into a passage that heads north. You decide to follow it and before long you come to another door. A sign reading “Store Room” is fixed to it. You try the handle and find that it is not locked. Your curiosity aroused, you open the door and enter a large room, full of supplies, evidently a storeroom, as the sign indicated. There are shelves lined with items of food such as dried meat, fish and cheese, and bottles of beer and wine. You may add up to four units to your provisions. You leave the room, returning to your previous location. From there you may go through the door in the western wall, if you haven’t already (turn to **6**), or step back into the passage and head through the northerly archway (turn to **48**)?

115

You survey the Asura’s chamber. There are some cupboards along the eastern wall. There is also a table in the centre of the room. Will you search the room (turn to **176**), or leave by the door through which you entered and continue down the passage (turn to **152**).

116

The Lion-Man roars in triumph. He then tells you: “Well, done Alkemisian! Well done! Today has proved to be a momentous day indeed for our peoples. Maybe the people of Agra too may benefit greatly from this victory. May Rogaar smile upon you always!” He roars once more, before bowing to you and once again vanishing into thin air. Turn to **193**.

117

Did you let a guard raise the alarm when you initially escaped from your prison cell? If so, turn immediately to **173**. If not you may leave through the northern door. The door opens into a passageway heading north. You decide to follow it, eventually coming across a junction where a passage joins yours from the east. Will you continue straight on (turn to **52**), or turn right (turn to **94**)?

118

After a short distance, the passage ends in a large cavern, about fifty feet in height and lit by a few torches. There is little of interest here, save for the ubiquitous stalagmites and stalactites, but you do see another path heading eastwards away from the far side. Just as you are about to decide what to do next, you see on the floor a metallic cylinder of some sort, propped up against a stalagmite. If you wish to investigate this, turn to **81**. Or, if you wish to ignore it, you may head eastwards away from the cavern via the new passage (turn to **135**), or, if you haven’t already been that way, you may instead retrace your steps to the junction, in order to head north (turn to **37**).

119

The growling is getting closer! You are quite alarmed by this, but then the lanterns mysteriously turn themselves back on, revealing that a huge bear is standing right next to you! You cry out as the creature hits your face forcefully with its arm (deduct 2 STAMINA points). You must fight it.

BEAR SKILL 8 STAMINA 12

If you win, turn to **188**.

120

Suddenly, the second of the Troll guards breaks off action and runs back down the corridor! He must be off to raise the alarm! *Test your Luck*. If you are Unlucky, turn to **100** when you defeat his colleagues. If are Lucky, continue the fight against the other guards. Turn to **85** if you are victorious.

121

You continue your voyage along the subterranean river, leaving the cavern behind you. The river changes to a more easterly course as it enters another tunnel. The lanterns here are much less abundant than previously, which slightly unnerves you. Then you see a disturbance in the water. It starts to bubble and you suspect the presence of more crocodiles. You are partially right at least, for rearing out of the water a few metres in front of you is some kind of mutant mixture of Crocodile and Lizard Man, standing upright with tearing arms. It stands at least ten feet out of the water, and you will have to battle the mutant to continue. You are standing precariously in your boat, so you must deduct 1 from your SKILL score during the battle.

CROCODILE MUTANT SKILL 10 STAMINA 10

If you win, turn to **44**.

122

You manage to avoid the largest of the rocks, but the boat is inundated with the raging waters, and you have to steer it towards the rocky shoreline of the cavern you find yourself in. Luckily, the torrent drives you directly onto the shore. The boat is damaged such that it can no longer serve you in your quest, but at least you can clamber out onto dry land in one piece, and your equipment is safe too. You pause to offer the gods your thanks for your lucky escape. The river continues through the rapids for some distance, so there’s no escaping Grudar’s dungeon that way. You happened to land on the northern bank of the river. The cavern is much like the others that you have passed through, but with one important difference. There seems to be a wide ramped passageway heading north away from the river. With no other option, you decide to follow it uphill. After a gruelling climb, it eventually flattens out (turn to **195**).

123

You approach a T-junction up ahead where you can head north or south, but some mysterious presence in your mind urges you to turn left to head north. You decide to do so. Turn to **98**.

124

You open the door and find yourself in a small chamber. Though the only furniture in the room consists of a couple of wooden benches, you discover that there is another guard in the room. He leaps at you, and you must quickly defeat him.

GUARD SKILL 9 STAMINA 7

If you defeat him in five Attack Rounds or less, you may quickly leave through an exit in the eastern wall.The guards chasing you enter the chamber, but are stalled by the sight that greets them (turn to **90**). If you take any longer than five Attack Rounds, the guards behind you catch up with you and skewer you with their spears...

125

The door is not locked and opens into a large airy chamber. It seems to have no further exits, but there are two Lizard Man guards present. They see you and charge at you. You must fight them together.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First LIZARD MAN	7	8
Second LIZARD MAN	8	8

If you win, you search the Lizard Men corpses and find nothing of use, but you investigate the chamber, and on top of a table at the far side you discover a piece of parchment with a curious message. “Shaft of light to be kept in her cell.” Make a note of this if you wish, before you leave the room, heading eastwards along the passage. Turn to **51**.

126

Believe it or not, Bho-bong is casting a spell at you. Suddenly, he points his fingers at your neck, and he laughs evilly. You feel an invisible noose being flung over your neck, and the next moment Bho-bong is pulling with his arms, strangling you to death with his magic! Soon he has squeezed the last breath out of you, and you topple in a lifeless heap to the floor. The wily wizard has foiled an attempt on his master’s life, at the cost of your own...

127

“To get to Kreshnel‘s quarters,” Prettima continues, “you have to travel north at every opportunity until you reach a massive metal door. But the only way to get in is to recite his rhyme. The door will immediately open.” She trails off. “Unfortunately, I do not know the rhyme, I was never given security clearance.” But if and when you reach the door, you will be asked if you know how to open it. Add the number hidden in the rhyme to the number of the reference you are on at the time, and turn to the new reference. Remember to add 2 LUCK points for this information. Will you ask her about anything you should know about the sorcerer (turn to **31**), or how the Hobbit ended up in her predicament (turn to **145**)? If you have asked two questions, turn to **23**.

128

Even while wielding his sword, Kreshnel mutters the incantation to a spell, immediately after crying, “Die, Alkemisian, die!” If you have a magic mace, you may use it to distract Kreshnel from his spellcasting and then resume your fight with him from where you left off. If you defeat him with the mace, add 50 to the number you were given when you obtained this weapon, and turn to the reference with the same number as the total

If you have a tube of Zyborium, you may use that on its own. Deduct 68 from the number you were given when you obtained it, and turn to the reference with the same number as the total.

If you have Fireflash staff, deduct 60 from the number you were given when you obtained it, and turn to the same reference as the total.

If, however, you have none of the above items, turn to **136**.

129

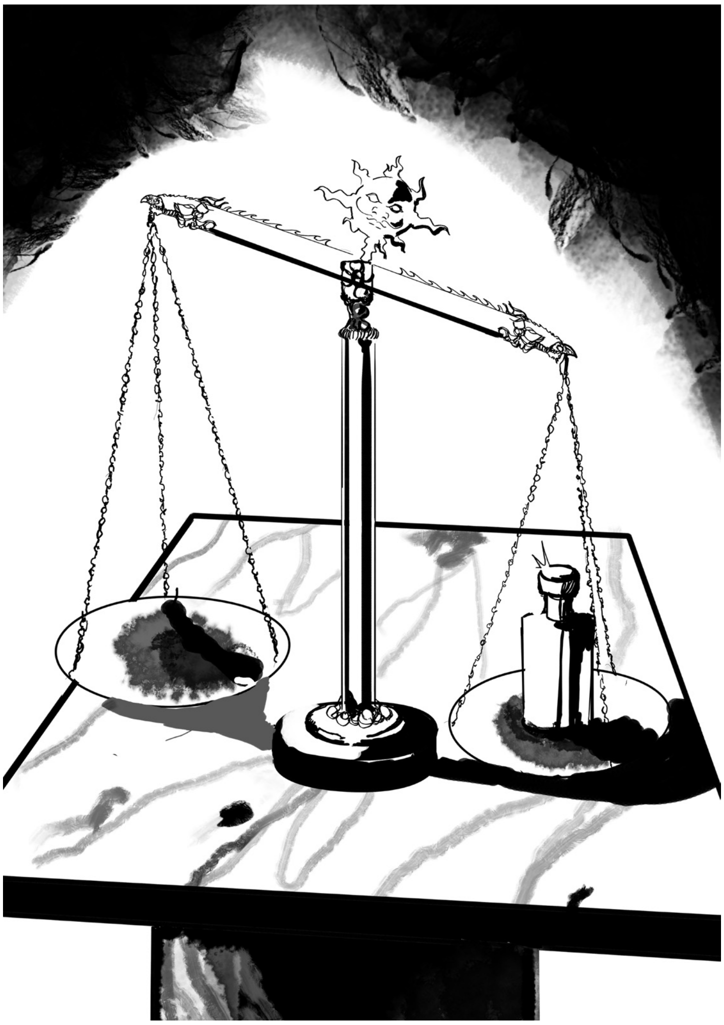
You shove the Agran against the wall, almost knocking him out in the process. And, while the others step over to his aid, you sprint through the exit to freedom. Turn to **191**.

130

You head northwards, but after a short while, you hear footsteps from just beyond a junction up ahead where a passage joins from the west. You pause and draw your sword, and within moments, a guard comes into view from the westerly tunnel. He wasn’t expecting you, and you manage to strike him once before he recovers to draw his own weapon. You must fight him

GUARD SKILL 8 STAMINA 5

If you win, you search him and find enough dried meat for 1 food ration. You may then continue by heading west (turn to **65**), or north (turn to **60**).



131

You continue down the passage, and after a short while you see a small wooden door in the western wall up ahead. A sign in the Asura language reads, “Golu mpqar io qba rt”. You try the handle and find that it is not locked. If you wish to open it, turn to **93**. If, instead, you wish to carry on northwards, turn to **54**.

132

You steer the craft to the south of the island. You see that the island does indeed extend as a rocky column almost as high as the ceiling of the cavern, some fifty to sixty feet above you. As you suspected, its sheer sides mean it is impossible to investigate. You glance to the southern shore of the cavern but don’t see anything of interest. The current continues to take you eastwards. Turn to **83**.

133

The room you find yourself in is rather small but circular. In front of you, in the centre of the room, is a curious sight. Upon a plinth a few feet high is a pair of unbalanced silver scales. The left hand pan is empty and has been pushed up by a gold weight in the right-hand pan. Being careful not to touch anything, you inspect the device more closely and see that there are twenty equally spaced holes on each arm of the scales. The pan with the weight hangs from the twelfth hole on the right-hand side, and you can just make out a stamp on the weight saying “imap niomcf”. The empty pan on the left hangs from the fourth hole on that side. And then you notice behind the scales four gold weights of equal size to that in the right-hand pan. There seems to be no exit from the chamber apart from the door behind you. All this seems rather mysterious! You have an inkling that adding some of the weights to the left-hand pan may be your best bet. But how much gold will you place on it? If you will add:

One bar	Turn to **163**.
Two bars	Turn to **196**.
Three bars	Turn to **109**.
Four bars	Turn to **79**.

134

You deduce that the Giant Scorpion and the Giant Cobra must be deadly enemies to have been placed so far apart in Grudar’s prison complex. Thinking quickly, you produce the scorpion’s severed claw from your backpack. The effect is just what you predicted. The Cobra sees the claw, whereupon it retreats to the southeast corner of the room, hissing angrily but not making any threatening moves against you. This allows you to step confidently over to the door in the southern wall. Just to make sure, you leave the claw just inside the room as you leave. The door opens into a passage heading south, before arriving at a dead end. You try to search the wall in front of you for a secret switch, but it is your shuffling foot that triggers a floor-based mechanism that causes the wall to slide to the right, revealing what you deduce to be the T-junction where you earlier turned left to head west. You ignore the option to backtrack south, leaving the only real choice to head east, past the sign saying “Weapons factory this way”. Turn to **186**.

135

The passage continues in an easterly direction away from the cavern. It soon reaches a second cavern, similar in size to the previous one, but you are not alone this time! A Giant Scorpion, some twenty feet long, lurks within, and upon seeing you, it scuttles over to attack you with large, dangerous-looking claws and an even deadlier-looking stinger. The scorpion’s armoured carapace means that your sword can only do 1 STAMINA point of damage to the creature. Moreover, if it wins an Attack Round and its Attack Strength is an even number, it has stung you for 4 STAMINA points of injury!

GIANT SCORPION SKILL 9 STAMINA 8

If you defeat it in battle, turn to **160**.

136

He casts his spell. You want to lunge at him with your sword, but instead of attacking him, you point the sword at your own stomach area! You struggle to keep Grudar’s will out of your mind, yet slowly but surely he gains the upper hand. The sorcerer grins malevolently as you drive your weapon deep into your abdomen. Within moments, your disembowelled body is sprawled lifeless at his feet. There is no escape now...

137

You go through the arch, thankful to have escaped the clutches of the vile giant. You go down the north-heading passage that you now find yourself in. Soon, you arrive at a junction where a passage joins yours from the west, but without warning, a metal portcullis drops down from the ceiling to block off this new passage. You are forced to continue northwards (turn to **34**).

138

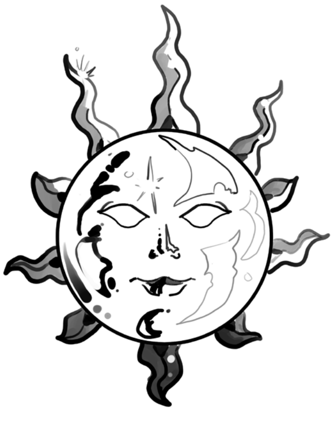
As you walk on down the passage, you hear footsteps approaching, and before long, two human guards and two Goblins come into view up ahead. They see you and draw their swords. You must fight them one at a time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First GOBLIN	6	6
First GUARD	7	8
Second GOBLIN	6	7
Second GUARD	8	8

If you win, turn to **26**.

139

After merging with another easterly tunnel, you come across a junction where you may head north (turn to 57), or northeast (turn to **73**).



140

You may take up to three provisions' worth of food from the kitchen, as it is well stocked with dried meat, fruit and bread, though much of the floor is heavily stained in the blood of the masterchefs. Likewise, the floor of the adjoining room is heavily splattered with the blood of Ramdon's goat-form after Zildo had "slaughtered" him. But here in the umpteen cupboards and shelves you find another unit's worth of food (nuts and cheese), and also a curious message written on a piece of parchment under a bottle of olive oil: "Masterchefs! Remember what happened to your predecessor (and complete imbecile) Olie Jamiver. Press the Rune of Chaos when passing through to my private quarters, and not the Rune of Life. GK". Make a note of this if you will. You head back out into the kitchen, just as Ramdon's corpse begins to twitch with the first signs of regeneration! You quickly make your way back into the corridor to head north. Turn to **22**.

141

You approach a junction up ahead where you can head north or west, but as you ponder about which direction to take, some mysterious presence causes a minor rock fall just inside the entrance to the westerly tunnel, giving you only the option to continue straight ahead in a northerly direction. You decide to do so. Turn to **98**.

142

Much as you would like to help the Hobbit, her Agran livery puts you off. She again begs you, "Please..." before slumping unconscious on the floor. You can do little more than leave the poor thing behind and carry on down the passage. But her death does cause you to feel some sympathy. Whatever she had done probably had not warranted the guards' treatment of her. This makes you even more determined to seek out their evil master Grudar Kreshnel and confront him. You continue northwards along the passageway. Before long, you hear a click above you. You look up towards the ceiling, but it is too late to avoid the massive rocks dropping on top of you from a hidden panel in the ceiling. You are hit right on the head by at least two of them, and you are buried alive. The deadly Darkstone Trap has claimed another victim...

143

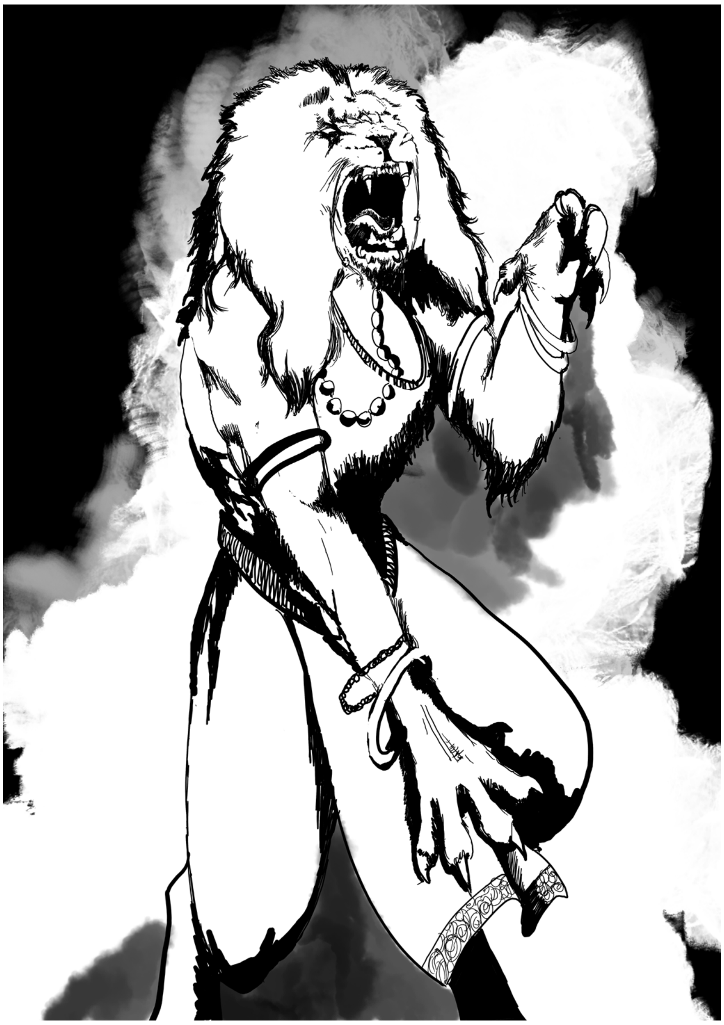
Finally, your boots give way to the nails. You wince in pain as a large nail pierces each of the soles of your feet (deduct 4 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point). But as soon as you are wounded, the nails disappear as if by magic! You proceed eastwards and before long the tunnel turns to the northeast for some distance, before bending back to the east (turn to **139**).

144

Bho-bong looks at you thoughtfully as you tell him your story. "I'm on my way to see Mr. Kreshnel. But I...er...got lost. I...oh yeah...I want to be recruited as a member of His Excellency's guards. Are there any vacancies left in...?" But Grudar's associate interrupts you, telling you this: "In actual fact, friend, you should have been directed to my room in the first place. Oh, those stupid fellows at the factory entrance! Well, time for some simple tests - simple tests for simple minds!" He laughs raucously after uttering his last remark. The first test is very simple indeed. Bho-bong wants to see how long you can hold your breath. Roll one dice and add 6. This is the amount of time Bho-bong considers suitable for Grudar's service. If the total is greater than your Current STAMINA, you have failed the test, and Bho-bong tells you that you must leave. If you do as he says, you leave by the door you entered by, and continue down the passage (turn to **54**). If instead you decide to threaten him, turn to **180**. If you pass, you can go on to the next test. The wizard now wants you to see how quickly you can draw your sword. Roll a die and add 4. If the total is greater than your Current SKILL score, you have failed, and you may either leave quietly and continue down the passage (turn to **54**), or threaten Bho-bong (turn to **180**). If you pass, Bho-bong laughs once again. Turn to **28**.

145

"Well, I actually once worked for Kreshnel, mostly in administration, and running errands, until a few weeks back when his Evilness discovered that I was married to a lovely Pixie boy, called Deni, from the Alkemisian side of the border," says Prettima, with some sadness. "We were both taken to Kreshnel's room, Deni was killed instantly by one of his demonic spells, and they imprisoned me. After that, I was taken back to the Sorcerer every day to be tortured..." her voice trails away. You suddenly realise she must have just received her daily beating, and her escorts were taking him back to the cells. You sympathize with her, and decide it is best to change the subject quickly. If you have already asked two questions, turn to **23**. Otherwise, will you ask her if there is anything you should know about the sorcerer (turn to **31**), or how the to reach the sorcerer (turn to **127**)?



146

"Bloody excellent!" cries Ramdon. "OK, Zildo, let's start bloody cooking!"

Zildo tells you, "Wait here, eager young volunteer, while we prepare a nice meaty feast for you! Original recipe, only the choicest ingredients!"

Both chefs then enter the side chamber, and Zildo returns accompanied by a large goat. "Here is an example of one of Agra's finest livestock!" Zildo announces. There is something about the goat that you can't quite place. It is wearing a chef's hat much like Zildo's! He leads the animal back into the side-chamber, and you soon hear a loud bleating, which stops immediately before there is a dull thud as if something heavy has fallen onto the floor of that chamber, obviously the body of the goat after Zildo has killed it. You hear a scraping noise and then Zildo re-enters the kitchen within a few minutes carrying a huge tray full of what appears to be fleshly slaughtered meat! He tosses the meat into the vat on to stove, whistling while he works, and after a good ten minutes he serves you a large bowlful of what looks and smells like a tasty stew!

Zildo motions for you to sit down at the wooden table, but a thought suddenly crosses your mind: where is Ramdon? "Um, where is the nice Mr. Gorsay?" you ask. "Oh, he's er, grabbing some more ingredients for Master Kreshnel's feast tonight, he'll be back presently!" Zildo assures you. Your mouth is watering at the prospect of partaking of the Chef's stew. Will you tuck straight into your meal (turn to **18**), or will you tell Zildo that you will wait for Ramdon to return (turn to **32**)?

147

You go through the guards' pockets and find ten gold coins. They also have two dice and a total of 2 units of provisions, all of which you may take with you. They are so drunk that they do not stir. Will you search the room itself if you haven't done so (turn to **95**), or will you leave via the door in the north wall of the first room (turn to **117**)?

148

The noise should have alerted you to the danger, as a huge sabre-toothed cat comes into view in the near-gloom! It has superb vision in the dark, so you must deduct 1 from your Attack Strength as you try to fend it off.

SABRE-TOOTHED TIGER SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

If you defeat it, you find nothing of any use within this cave, so you may leave and enter the small cave (turn to **157**), or leave the area via the northerly passageway (turn to **38**).

149

You notice two doors leading from the room. One leads from the south wall (turn to **78** to leave through this door), while the other leads from the east wall (to leave by this door, turn to **43**).

150

"Well, Grudar, it's just you and me now!" you cry, even as his treacherous sidekick breathes his last. Now it is your turn to attack. But how will you proceed? If you attack him with your sword, turn to **111**. If you have found and worn a sun mask, turn to **69**. If you have met Narasingh, turn to **178**.

151

The passage turns to the south-east after a while before bending back towards the east. Turn to **139**.

152

Ahead, you see that a passage joins yours from the north. Will you continue eastwards through the spikes (turn to **143**), or down the new passage, which doesn't seem to be as risky (turn to **89**)?

153

You decide to see what happens next, as the voice was challenging you to stay put! A Lion-Man, literally a man with a lion's head, rapidly materializes in front of you out of thin air! He is a solidly built creature, well over seven feet tall, with golden-yellow skin and a regally flowing mane. He is clothed only in flowing pantaloons. He speaks to you. "So, one who is courageous enough to face a Lion-Man? And you are not an Agran, I can sense that much!" You stand in awe of the Lion-Man, a rare breed living only in a small part of the Agran/Alkemisian borderlands. This is the first time you have seen one. "My name is Narasingh. Many injustices and atrocities have been perpetrated by the evil Grudar Kreshnel against your tribe. My people are also suffering, as we are diminishing in number. But as the lion god Lord Rogaar's servants, we have to help you in your battle. I volunteered to enter Kreshnel's lair some days after the disaster at Onyxas. I was captured, but my magical abilities enable me to escape physical barriers. I sense great courage and fortitude in you, Alkemisian, which is why I decided to remain within the dungeon in the hope that I could meet you. I, Narasingh, hereby swear to help you defeat the Agran warlord." He bows before you, then continues, "When you reach His Evilness, merely call my name and I will be there at your side!" He bows once again, and as a courtesy, you bow before him in return. When you return to the upright posture, you see that he has disappeared into thin air! Not quite comprehending what has just happened, but filled with resolve, you leave through the arch in the east wall. Add 1 LUCK point for gaining a much needed ally, and turn to **16**.

154

You manage to take your guards by surprise and break free from their clutches. You try to use your manacle-bound hands to knock a guard out, and he falls, stunned, onto the cell floor. However you scrape your wrists painfully against the metal frame of the manacle and you must deduct 1 STAMINA point. Still, there is only one guard to fight, but remember to note your reduced SKILL score while resolving the battle!

First GUARD SKILL 7 STAMINA 6

If you win in four Attack Rounds or less, turn to **58**. If you are still fighting after four Attack Rounds, turn to **88**.

155

You open the door and step into a large room with a very high ceiling. You also see its very large occupant, a Giant Asura, towering above you! The demonic humanoid, some three metres tall, growls menacingly, "More food for Kumbak!", and you panic, trying to think what you need to do. The door seems far too small to let Kumbak, as he apparently calls himself, through, so you could step back outside (turn to 57 to return to the junction to head north). Alternatively, you could use a magical item or other artefact against him (turn to 24). If you want to battle him with your sword, you have a very tough battle indeed! He has the ability to become invisible, so every other Attack Round starting with the second, you must roll three dice, not two, to calculate his Attack Strength!

KUMBAK THE GIANT ASURA SKILL 12 STAMINA 18

If you win, you examine Kumbak's immense corpse as well as the room, but find nothing of interest, except for some dried meat equalling 2 rations. You may leave through the arch in the northern wall (turn to **137**), or you may return to the previous junction to head north there instead (turn to **57**).

156

You leave the prison area behind you, not having met any further prisoners. Fortunately, there don't seem to be any guards around either, but then again, this could be just wishful thinking! The rock-hewn tunnel is lit by lanterns every few metres, so you can at least see what's ahead of you without any trouble. You soon approach a junction where you can turn right to head east, or continue northwards. You ponder Malook's words, but now you must make a decision as to how to proceed. Will it be to head northwards (turn to **37**), or to head eastwards (turn to **118**)?

157

You can barely enter the cave in a stooped position, but you manage to venture a few metres in, and in the darkness, you feel the floor for anything useful. You find some gold coins (ten in all), but nothing else. Now, you may back out and either enter the large cave (turn to **107**), or carry on northwards (turn to **38**).

158

You leave the room via the door in the north wall. This leads into a passage heading north, which bends round to the east after a short while. However, you see ahead that there is a dead end up ahead. You approach the blank wall and scan it closely to see if there are any secret mechanisms opening up a hidden passage. After a few minutes searching fruitlessly, the passage does in fact open up, revealing another tunnel running north-south. After pausing a while to consider your options, you decide that you would make better headway if you head north. Turn to **42**.

159

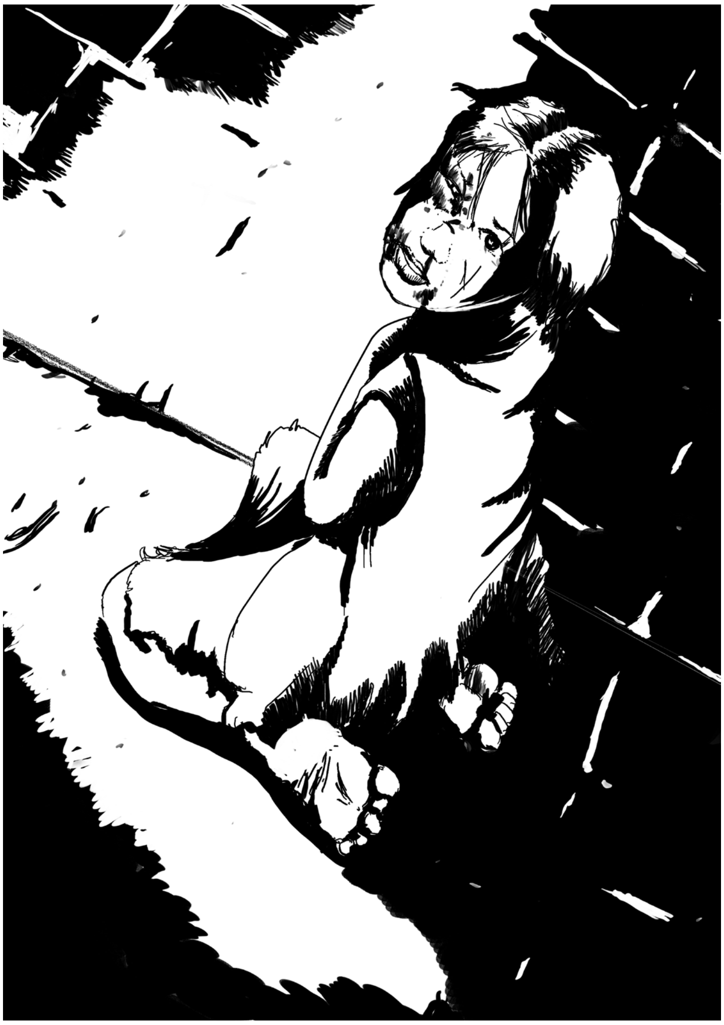
The parchments on top of the table are mostly boring military instructions, but one very short message does grab your attention: "The balance is the key!" Make a note of this if you want. Will you now investigate the chest lying beneath the table (turn to **198**), or instead head back to the junction and continue down the passageway in a westerly direction (turn to **41**)?

160

The scorpion is dead. You may take one of its severed claws with you if you wish. However, no further obstacles are in your path as you follow a tunnel leading eastwards away from the cavern. Before long, you approach a junction, where a passage from the north joins yours. So, will you head north (turn to **46**), or continue east (turn to **20**)?

161

"Kumbak not like Puflin!" the giant Asura exclaims, as you show him the bird-monster's severed beak. He reaches out to grab it from you. You offer no resistance. "Kumbak think you great guy for killing Puflin." He motions for you to pass his gigantic legs as he examines the colourful beak as a child might examine a new toy, and you are able to leave through the arch in the northern wall. Add 1 LUCK point for your escape unscathed. Turn to **137**.



162

You open the door into a small room, lit by a solitary lantern above the entrance. A smelly bunk lies against the wall to your left, and there is a door in the wall opposite you as well as another in the wall to your right. The room is uninteresting, but you can hear a group of people talking behind the door to your right. You chance creeping over to put your ear against the timbers. The conversation is rowdy, and sometimes appears to lack any sense, though the voices definitely seem to be human. Do you open this door (turn to **67**), or will you leave by the door in the north wall (turn to **117**)?

163

The left-hand pan moves back to the left, but not enough for the scales to be in balance. You hear an ominous click, and before you can do anything else, the door you entered by slams shut. You panic and step over to it in a desperate attempt to re-open it. Then you hear it – a hissing sound emanating from all around the room, and you see a purple gas filling the chamber. You realise that your next breaths will be your last, as the toxic fumes enter your lungs, causing you to cough and splutter. You begin to lose consciousness, and not long after, you slump lifeless to the floor...

164

You open the door and enter a small room, lit by a lantern opposite you. You see that there are shelves on three walls full of food, consisting of bread, cheese, dried meat and fish, and fruit. You may replenish your rations by up to four units. There is no other exit, so you leave by the door through which you entered and continue along the passageway. Turn to **123**.

165

You race down the corridor, with the six guards in hot pursuit. You suddenly see that another guard blocks your way up ahead. He produces a spear, and you must fight him.

GUARD SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

If you get wounded once, this means that the guard has delayed you long enough for his fellows to catch up and kill you off with their spears... If you win without getting wounded, you race off without even pausing to sheathe your sword. The corridor turns to the north and ends at a door in the wall in front of you. Turn to **82**.

166

You head west and before long reach a rickety wooden bridge crossing the river you saw earlier. The bridge seems to be in a state of disrepair, with many beams rotten or even missing. If you decide against continuing over the bridge, you can return to the previous junction to continue northwards (turn to **175**). If you want to cross the river here regardless, you must *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **112**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **87**.

167

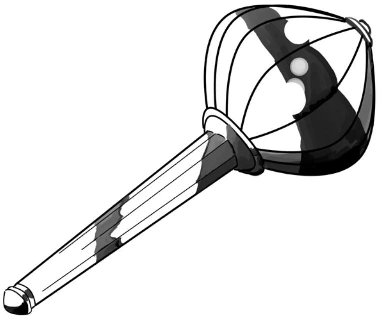
The door opens into a small room, similar in construction to the passage. There is a large wooden chest on the floor in the middle of the room. You investigate this, but find that the lid is firmly locked. If you think you know how to open this chest, you should know what to do. If you don't know how to open it, your efforts are in vain, and you have no choice but to step back into the passage disappointed (turn to **36**).

168

You manage to get across the bridge unscathed, though a loose beam starts creaking and falls away into the river just as you reach the eastern bank of the river! Relieved, you find yourself in a passage that leads eastwards away from the river for a very short distance before ending at a T-junction. If you wish to head north, turn to **175**. If you wish to turn south, turn to **55**.

169

The Hobbit prisoner looks up at you, and you can see she has been badly beaten. She seems to be dressed in a tunic in Agran colours, along with a dark cloak, both of which are quite tatty and covered in bloodstains. She manages to say something. "Please give me some food," she sobs. If you wish to help her, turn to **185**. If you think that you should not, turn to **142**.



170

You are about halfway there when a Lion-Man, literally a man with a lion's head, rapidly materializes in front of you out of thin air! You cannot stop yourself colliding with him, and he catches your arm with his sharp teeth. Lose 4 STAMINA points. He is a powerfully built creature, well over seven feet tall, wearing only brightly coloured pantaloons, exposing much of his golden-yellow skin. A regally flowing mane tops his head. He steps towards you, roaring menacingly. You will have to fight him!

LION-MAN SKILL 9 STAMINA 8

If you win, he disappears as abruptly as he appeared. Mystified, you may leave through the eastward arch. Turn to **16**.

171

The little boat soon founders, leaving you helpless in the water. You struggle to tread water, but you stay afloat. Unfortunately, another Crocodile Mutant notices the commotion and turns towards you. Having sheathed your weapon in order to remain above the surface, you have no time to react except to scream in terror as the monster devours you greedily. You have met a sticky end, deep within the Agran prison complex...

172

You open the door into a short passageway that leads to another door. You decide to open it, and you see that a room lies beyond, with a door in the north wall. There is nothing of interest save for a table in the centre of the room. Atop the desk there is some dried meat and bread, which you may add to your Provisions (these will provide you with 2 units). Turn to **158**.

173

Before you can do anything else, the door to the north bursts open, and a familiar face appears: the guard you let escape earlier! And he is not alone, being accompanied by ten other guards, including two demonic Asuras! "There's the Alkemisian scum!" the guard shouts. Asuras have the ability to become invisible, meaning this fight is going to be very one-sided. In fact, it is so one-sided that you are slain within seconds...

174

Unfortunately, the door is made of impregnable metal, and it proves too strong to force open. You have failed in your mission. But your disappointment doesn't last long, for the floor beneath you suddenly gives way, and you fall into a chamber occupied by a massive cauldron of boiling hot acid...

175

You head northwards, the passageway generally following the river. Then you suddenly come to an abrupt halt, as you see that part of the passageway has caved into the river, leaving a gap some ten feet wide. Looking down when you reach the edge, you see that it is around the same distance in depth. To continue northwards, you have to make a running jump. Roll two dice and compare the total with your current SKILL score. If the total is less than or equal to your SKILL, you make it across to the other side (turn to **49**). If, however, the total is greater than your SKILL, you fall heavily into the gap in the tunnel, losing 4 STAMINA points in the process. If you are still alive, you are forced to climb up to the far side, a tiring task, but one that you eventually succeed in. Turn to **49**.

176

Will you search the low, wooden cupboards lining one of the walls (turn to **53**), or the items atop the circular stone table in the middle of the room (turn to **10**)?

177

You soon reach a small, bare room with a door in the southern wall as your only way onwards. The sound of running footsteps behind you tells you that you mustn't dilly-dally! You step forward to open the door, adorned by a small sign in the Asuran language saying "Fou qcf qii ln". Turn to **82**.

178

"O, Narasingh, hear me!" you whisper. Almost immediately, the Lion-Man materialises by your side. He roars at Kreshnel, whose mouth opens wide in amazement! Kreshnel quickly recovers his composure, and advances on Narasingh with his sword. "It appears one of Lord Rogaar's earthly representatives has decided to pay a visit!" Kreshnel sneers. "Well, I defy you! Kneel before Grudar!" he cries, pointing to the floor in front of him. Narasingh for his part roars again, claws extended, his yellow mane almost glowing! Resolve the battle between the two powerful beings.

	SKILL	STAMINA
GRUDAR KRESHNEL	12	18
NARASINGH	11	14

If Narasingh defeats the evil warlord, turn to **116**. If he fails to defeat Kreshnel, Narasingh will not "die" but will merely disappear into thin air. You must make a note of your adversary's STAMINA score and continue the battle yourself. As soon as the sorcerer is reduced to 4 STAMINA points or less, or if you survive four Attack Rounds if his STAMINA is above 4, turn to **128**.

179

Unfortunately, a guard notices you bending over a pile of freshly manufactured swords. While you have your back to him, he brings his mace down squarely onto the back of your head. You do not live long enough to feel the powerful blow...

180

When you draw your weapon and threaten him, Bho-bong throws his arms about wildly, crying, 'I knew it! I knew it! A no good Alkemisian!' He then makes a rather amusing spectacle of himself: he rubs his stomach and pats his head at the same time while mumbling a weird incantation. Do you press home your attack (turn to **126**), or quickly leave by the door behind you and continue down the passage (turn to **54**)?

181

You utter the Asuran phrase and the chest clicks open, allowing you to lift the lid. Inside is a sight for sore adventurer's eyes: a golden mace! It happens to have magical properties thar will add 3 points to your Attack Strength in battle. Remember the number "143" - it may be useful later. Add 1 LUCK point. There is nothing else of interest here. You decide to make your way back into the passage outside (turn to **36**).

182

You discover a vial of blue liquid on a table beside on of the bunks, a tube made of a red crystalline substance hidden in a cupboard against the northern wall, and a bag of gold coins carried by one of the guards. You unstopper the vial and note that the blue liquid smells quite pleasant. This is in fact a vial of strength potion, enough for two doses, and each dose will allow you to restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, though you cannot use it during combat. There are a total of 12 gold coins in the pouch, and you may take these with you. Most interesting by far is the crystalline substance, which is in fact Zyborium. It emits very intense beams of energy that could be lethal to anyone in their path. Lethal, that is, to anyone but you, since you are bearing the tube.

During each battle you engage in from here on, you have the opportunity to use the Zyborium if you win an Attack Round. It can be used only once per battle (fighting more than one opponent at a time counts as one battle) and against only one opponent. If you decide to use it, each time it is used you may deduct 6 points from your opponent's STAMINA score. The Zyborium is an extremely potent weapon, but if and when you should ever face Grudar Kreshnel, his magic is so powerful that you may not use the crystal until the text explicitly tells you that you may do so.

Remember to note down the number "170", as it may be useful later. Add 1 LUCK point and turn to **96** to continue.

183

The passage continues eastwards and is quite stony underfoot. Soon you feel something beneath your feet. You look down and see sharp nails on the floor. Luckily, your boots protect you for now. You continue along the passage, and soon you see a door in the right hand wall. It is not locked. If you wish to investigate further, turn to **7**. If instead you wish to continue eastwards, turn to **152**.

184

You try to use your sword to split the door's timbers, but to no avail! The weapon passes right through the portal! You momentarily fall to your knees dejected, but just then the door comes back to life, and Artriv's arms reach out to snatch you through the portal! You turn to run away, but it is too late! He easily catches you, and you shriek as your clothes catch fire. There is nothing you can do to prevent Artriv's flaming arms roasting you alive, and snatching your soul to join both him and Grudar Kreshnel in the Netherworld forever…

185

The Hobbit wants some food, but luckily the dead guards had four rations between them. You save two for yourself and offer the remainder to their prisoner. In spite of her obvious weakened state, she eats heartily. Once she recovers, she introduces herself. "My name is Prettima. How wonderful it is to meet an Alkemisian down here! I can help you out in your escape attempt, though one must be careful. Walls have ears, as they say!" Will you ask her how to get to Kreshnel's room (turn to **127**), anything you should know about the sorcerer (turn to **31**), or how the Hobbit ended up in her predicament (turn to **145**)?

186

The passage continues in an easterly fashion. It is very broad and brightly lit, with double the usual number of lanterns. A small door appears up ahead in the northern wall, but then suddenly all is dark; the lanterns turn off as if by magic! Will you grope for the door (turn to **172**), or carry on eastwards in the dark (turn to **5**)?

187

The arch leads into a passageway heading east, which you follow. After a short distance, you see that the passage leads to a large cavern bisected roughly north-south by an underground river. The far side is visible and seems to be no more than a few dozen yards away. But as you approach the river, the lantern-light does not seem to penetrate the dark water. You feel that the only options open to you are either to test the water to see how deep it is (turn to **2**), or to follow a narrow path heading roughly southwards along the river (turn to **29**).

188

You carry on down the passage, which bends to the north after a while. Turn to **42**.

189

If you have either a Fireflash Staff or a tube of Zyborium, you decide to use it. In a few minutes, the intensely hot beam has made a hole large enough for you to crawl through. If you have neither of these items, you will need to suffer a 2 STAMINA point deduction for barging the door open with your shoulder. Either way, turn to **80**.

190

You continue down the passage, but after only a few minutes, you see that there is a door ahead. It is your only way forwards, so you try the handle. The door opens into a large room, with a few bunks against the western wall, and another door in the eastern wall. However, also present in the room are three guards, who had been relaxing on their bunks. They quickly grab their weapons upon seeing you, and you must fight them all at once.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First GUARD	7	8
Second GUARD	7	8
Third GUARD	6	8

If you win, you may search the room (turn to **182**), or just leave by the east door (turn to **96**).

191

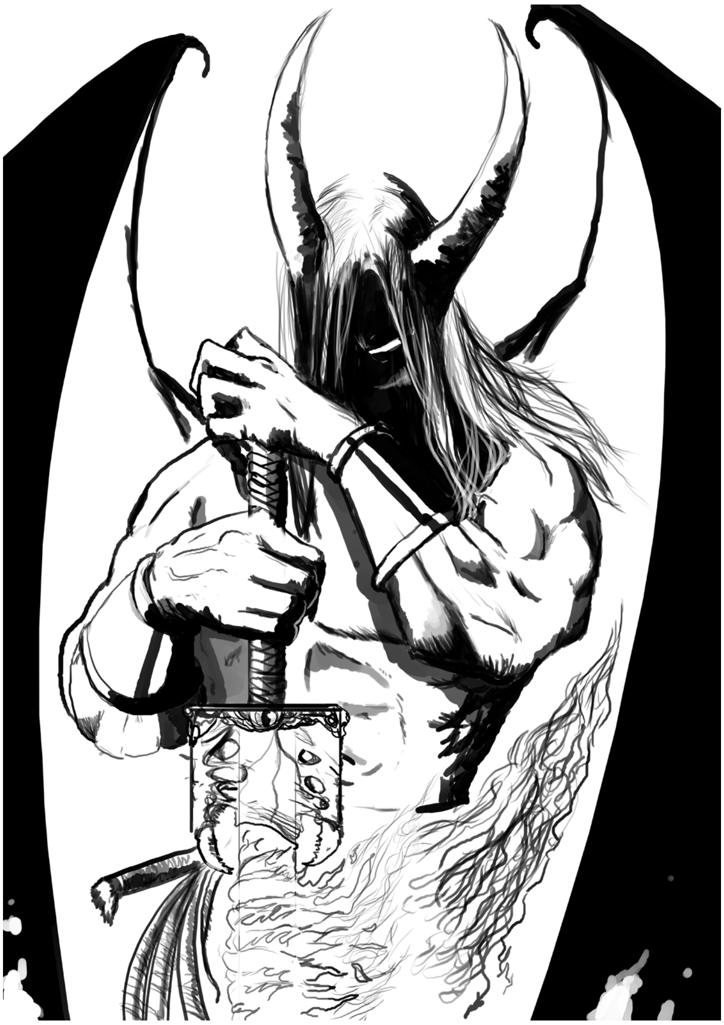
You could almost whoop for joy as you escape from Grudar Kreshnel's prison. It is a bright morning, the sunshine forcing you to shield your eyes after your many weeks underground. But the guards chasing you stop and stay back in the tunnel, arguing amongst themselves as to who is to blame for letting you escape! Taking advantage of their rancour and disarray, you make your escape, jumping onto the ground outside and running eastwards as fast as you can. You deduce that you are only a few miles from the border. An hour or so later, you meet up with a detachment of Alkemisian troops near the woodland along the frontier. Excitedly, you relay to them the good news of your escape. Or is it? With Grudar Kreshnel's regime still in place, your beloved kingdom of Alkemis is still under threat of invasion. The town of Onyxas and the other border areas captured by Agra during the operation where you yourself were abducted are still under the control of Grudar's forces. Upon your return to Alkemis City the next day, the populace turns out to welcome you home, but the general atmosphere is subdued. Indeed, when you are escorted to King Alburian's palace and are debriefed in the presence of your sovereign, there is an air of deep anxiety, not least because the drought still holds the capital city in its grip. Alburian reluctantly decides that there is no choice but to try and wrest control of Onyxas by force. You agree to the plan, and you decide that you must lead the Alkemisian counter-attack, departing Alkemis City two days after your arrival there, but just outside Onyxas, your force of brave warriors is confronted by the Agran occupiers and you are slain during an all-out attack against them...

192

You attempt to steer the little boat in a south-westerly direction, but the current is too strong. You are still within the cavern when you give up, so you let the craft drift with the current. Turn to **25**.

193

Grudar Kreshnel lies dead before you. His corpse is a reminder as to how close you yourself came to death ever since he ordered your capture, but you are thankful that his evil reign is at an end. Although you are expecting the worst, all you can detect is a faint whispering sound as his soul escapes his body. It ascends as a faint, black cloud towards the ceiling, and then sinks back down into a tall mirror attached to the cupboard at the far end of the room. You cannot help but be drawn towards the cupboard, out of sheer curiosity. What could be going on here? You look deep into the cupboard door. Suddenly, a mist swirls around in the door. It forms into an image, human-shaped, which is reddish in colour. This image is of Artriv, the Dark Lord of the Asura faith, and a Fire Demon to boot. It appears that Grudar employed the cupboard door as a portal to the nether world! The image of Artriv speaks: "So, you have dared to destroy my servants! You must die too!" The image now seems to be made of flames. He brandishes what looks like a real whip and a flaming sword and steps out from the cupboard into the room! He is tall, very tall, with red skin and two gigantic, leathery wings. He has horns on his head and cloven hooves for feet. You will have to fight for your life against Artriv. During each Attack Round, roll one extra die. If you roll between 1 and 4, searing jets of flame from his nostrils strike you for the loss of 2 STAMINA points, irrespective of which of you won that Attack Round. Note this could mean an extra loss of STAMINA if he hits you with his whip or sword!



ARTRIV SKILL 10 STAMINA 10

If you reduce the fire demon's STAMINA to 2, turn to **21**.

194

The Zyborium comes to life. The Giant Asura covers his eyes before a blast of energy emerges from the tube to strike him in the chest. Despite his injury, he recovers, and you must fight him with your sword. Kumbak still has the ability to become invisible, so every other Attack Round starting with the second, you must roll three dice, not two, to calculate his

Attack Strength!

KUMBAK THE GIANT ASURA SKILL 9 STAMINA 9

If you win, you examine Kumbak's immense corpse as well as the room, but find nothing of interest, except for some dried meat equalling 2 rations. You leave through the arch in the northern wall (turn to **137**).

195

Up ahead, you hear the loud noise of what sounds like some kind of industrial work, and it gets louder and louder as you progress. Before long, the passage leads to an underground weapons factory, occupying a large cavern in front of and beneath you, some one hundred feet high. Furnaces and foundries occupy much of the space, and there are racks upon racks of freshly made swords, shields and countless other items of warfare along the walls. So Malook was right about there being a factory. But how will you escape the dungeon? It isn't clear if there is another way out, and guards, comprising humans, Asuras and Lizard Men, are posted everywhere, watching over the workers. Will you pose as a worker (turn to **9**), or investigate the weaponry being manufactured (turn to **179**)? Or will you merely creep stealthily towards the eastern end of the factory in the hope of finding its exit, avoiding both workers and guards (turn to **86**)?

196

The left-hand pan moves back to the left, but not enough for the scales to be in balance. You hear an ominous click, and before you can do anything else, the door you entered by slams shut. You panic and step over to it in a desperate attempt to re-open it. Then you hear it – a hissing sound emanating from all around the room, and you see a purple gas filling the chamber. You realise that your next breaths will be your last, as the toxic fumes enter your lungs, causing you to cough and splutter. You begin to lose consciousness, and not long after, you slump lifeless to the floor...

197

Your curiosity is aroused by this ladder, and you grip the rungs firmly to make sure the ladder is secured at the top and bottom before ascending. The climb is arduous, but you do see that the ladder ends in the ceiling above. When you reach halfway, you chance looking down and see the river far below you, and the island-column extending way past you. The effect is dizzying! Roll two dice and compare the total with your current STAMINA score. If the total is equal to or less than your STAMINA, you remain on the ladder. Turn to **45**. If the total is greater than your STAMINA, you lose your grip on the ladder and fall heavily to the shore line below. Roll two dice and deduct the total from your STAMINA score. If you are still alive you decide that you are too badly hurt to attempt another climb, so you painfully get back into your boat after pushing it back on to the river. Turn to **83** to continue downstream.

198

You open the chest, which you find unlocked. But before you can even think, a crossbow bolt from within thuds into your neck. You collapse to the floor, as the fast-acting poison takes effect. The chest was a booby-trap! Roll two dice and deduct the total from your STAMINA score. If you are still alive, you need several minutes to recover your strength, but you may search the table if you haven't already done so (turn to **159**), or just leave the room and head back to the previous junction to continue westwards (turn to **41**).

199

You steer the boat to the shore, and then you step back onto dry land to investigate the sack. You see that it contains a silver sword! How it got here is anyone's guess, but after testing it in your hands, you waste no time in chucking away your current weapon into the river and replacing it with this gleaming blade. It is enchanted and will add four points to your Attack Strength in battle! Also add 1 LUCK point for your find. There is something else in the sack – a metal bucket, which you may take with you as well. You return to the boat, using the oar to push the vessel back out into the middle of the river to continue your journey downstream. Turn to **121**.

200

You step over to Prettima's body, and cover her as well as you can with the tattered remains of her cloak, after saying a prayer for her soul. Heartbroken, you desperately wish she were still alive to see the demise of her former master and his henchmen. But you compose yourself, and look round the room in more detail. For the first time you notice that Kreshnel's chamber room has windows, and daylight is seeping through the ornate curtains! There is a door in the far side of the room, opposite the remains of the cupboard. You open it, and the sight that greets you makes you jump for joy – the outside world! It is a bright morning, and the sunshine forces you to shield your eyes after your many weeks underground. You find yourself looking out over a stone staircase only a few feet off the ground and deduce that you can't be more than a few miles from the Alkemisian border. You have indeed escaped from the Sorcerer! Just then, a detachment of guards enter the room and gasp as they see their dead leader. Taking advantage of their shock, you make your escape, jumping onto the ground outside and running eastwards as fast as you can. An hour or so later, you meet up with a detachment of Alkemisian troops near the woodland along the border. Excitedly, you relay to them the good news. Upon your return to Alkemis City the next day, the populace turns out to welcome you home, the threat of drought now lifted, and you are presented before King Alburian, who promotes you to General. With Grudar Kreshnel's death, and Artriv's confinement to the Netherworld, your beloved kingdom of Alkemis is surely safe from invasion for the time being. Hopefully Kreshnel's successor will agree to talks with King Alburian. Surely they won't be as tainted with Evil as he was, will they? Well, we'll have to wait and see!

THE FACT OF FICTION

"The Fact of Fiction" is a series of articles designed to take a deeper look at the information presented in a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, whether it be in-jokes, goofs, continuity with other gamebooks, the background to the creation of the book, or similar things. In many ways it is to act like a DVD commentary for the book, telling you things that you might not have already known.

Armed with two dice, a pencil and an eraser, **Alexander Ballingall** sets off on a perilous quest to find the Warlock's treasure and take a few notes on the way...

Cover

- Originally it was intended that illustrator Russ Nicholson was to provide the cover as well as the interior art, but there was confusion over what was wanted for the cover. Deadlines meant that Nicholson had to make a start on the interior art and a different artist (Peter Andrew Jones) engaged for the cover. The Wizard "Series 1" cover brief for artist Martin McKenna was to use the same elements as the original cover, but to render them in a more "modern" style.
- The book is one of only two titles during the Puffin Books run that had a second piece of cover art commissioned. Peter Andrew Jones replaced his original art with a different piece in 1987 as the range made the transition to what is commonly referred to as the "Dragon" cover format. This new cover had originally been painted for the boardgame version of the book released by Jackson and Games Workshop in 1986 (see "A Tale of Multiple Warlocks" for other versions of this book). In the process of producing this new cover, Jones matched the depiction of Zagor to that of Nicholson's illustration at 358.
- The font used for the title text, Bradley, is later used again for *Portal of Evil* (Peter Darvill-Evans, 1989), the only time in the Puffin range that two unrelated books use the same font for their titles.

Title Page

- Conceived originally in 1980 as a picture book-style adventure, till the costs of such a style of illustrated book sent them back to the drawing board, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone finally began writing the book in August 1981, having originally pitched the book to Puffin Books under the title *The Magic Quest*. In fact, Livingstone's later *Adventures of Goldhawk* series (1995) is probably fairly close to the concept Livingstone and Jackson originally envisaged.

Dedication

- While the identities of the Anne and Neville in Livingstone's dedication in the Puffin edition are unknown (this changes to Anneka Livingstone, Ian's mother, in the Wizard editions), the Joanna Ashton of the Puffin edition later became Jackson's wife and thus referred to as simply Joanna in the dedication of the Wizard editions.
- In both versions of the dedication, Jackson refers to Joanna as Galadriel, the fictional Elf of Lothlórien from J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55).
- In the "Sample Adventure" edition that was given away with copies of issue 68 of *Cartoon Network Magazine* in 2003 (see opposite page), the dedications are replaced by an extra "Introduction" (see also "Equipment and Potions" and

---

Of those who returned to the village, none contemplated going back to Firetop Mountain.

What if *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* had not been published (perish the thought)? One could assume that perhaps eventually something like the *Golden Dragon* series might have taken up the reigns as the main UK-based gamebook range (who would we look as we do Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone?). Or perhaps it might have been *GrailQuest* or *Lone Wolf* instead? The reality is, the most of those similar series began in the wake of the popularity of the *Fighting Fantasy* collection, so not only has this book bequeathed us a fantasy world and a series of rules by which to navigate it, but the gamebook boom of the mid-1980s.

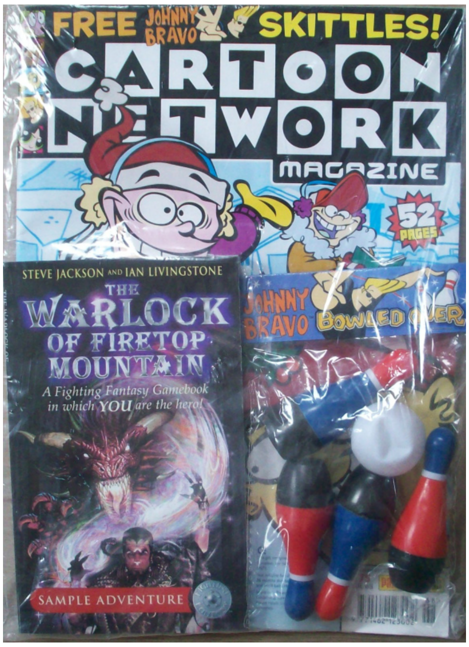
This then is the keystone around which the fledgling land of Allansia was crafted across 1983/84 and gave the series its first "big bad" to slay in the form of the wizard Zagor (how many others have fallen to the battle hungry swords of readers since?). Everything that was needed for the eventual world of Titan to grow was planted in this book.

The impact of the book is also noticeable in the way which other gamebook series either aped the game system to a certain extent, or tried to outdo it in terms of paragraph numbers, available attributes, or complexity (the way some fantasy authors attempt to out-Tolkein Tolkein). It is also noticeable in how the *Fighting Fantasy* series struggled to expand and evolve beyond the system and formula established here.

Jackson would go on to try and push are these limits in terms of genre and complexity, and Livingstone would see just how hard he could make it for the player to stay on the "one true route" through his adventures, but in a way *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* represents lightning caught in a bottle. The magic that is this original adventure was never quite captured again...

218 for other changes) that was designed to "sell" the gamebook to the audience receiving the sample edition, who were presumably assumed to be unfamiliar with gamebooks.

Equipment and Potions


FREE JOHNNY BRAVO SKITTLES!
CARTOON NETWORK MAGAZINE
52 PAGES
STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
A Fighting Fantasy Gamebook in which YOU are the hero!
SAMPLE ADVENTURE
JOHNNY BRAVO BOWLED OVER

- Unlike all the gamebooks in the range that followed and which used the same choice of three potions, in *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* each of the generic three choices of potion contains *two* doses. However, several of the mini solo adventures published in *Warlock* also feature potions with two doses.
- The three pre-generated characters of the Wizard Books "Series 2" edition (Vignor Firestorm, Haldar Eriksson and Ophelia Lapwing) are each equipped with only 6 provisions as opposed to the regular 10.
- In the "Sample Adventure" edition the player begins with only one set of provisions.

Rumours

- Published two years later, the two-part adaptation of the gamebook in the pages of *Warlock* allowed for the opportunity to revise the background section of the adventure. The publication of six additional books in the series (five of which were set in Allansia) meant that details from this fledgling geography could be incorporated. The Pagan Plain and Moonstone Hills are identified in the new background and the nameless village of the gamebook is given a title (see "More than a Little Lost?").
- Thanks to the background section, Goblins hold the distinction of being the first nonhuman species to be mentioned in the gamebooks. The depiction of Goblins in the *Fighting Fantasy* universe (such as in *Scorpion Swamp* by the US Steve Jackson (1984) and *Return to Firetop Mountain* by Livingstone (1992)) is closer to that of their depiction in *The Lord of the Rings* as roughly Human-sized creatures, rather than to their traditional appearance in folklore, and other modern fantasy such as the *Harry Potter* novels (1997~2007) and the film *Labyrinth* (1986), where they are on the diminutive side. Generally they are portrayed as being mischievous in behaviour and usually grotesque in appearance.

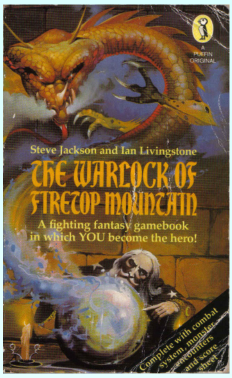
1
Arriving at the base of Firetop Mountain, the hero takes a moment to centre themselves before entering the main tunnel.

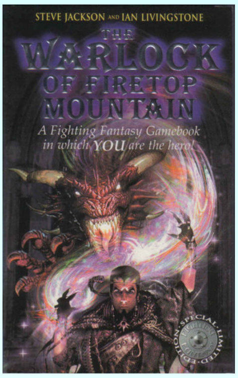
- The text muses that as no one can scale the peak of the mountain, identifying what on the top and producing the red colour is impossible. In *Caverns of the Snow Witch* (Livingstone, 1984) the red covering is identified as a type of Sleeping Grass which nearly causes the hero of that adventure to fall asleep and succumb to the Death Spell afflicting them.
- This reference has been illustrated twice, once for the book and once for the *Warlock* magazine edition, and on both occasions drawn by Nicholson. His second version for *Warlock* is a certainly more detailed and elaborate cave entrance!

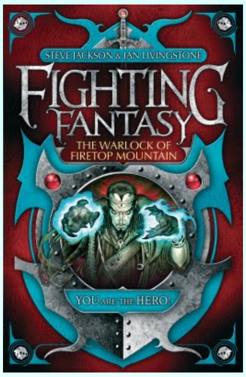
2
The hero attempts to avoid gaining the attention of an Ogre as they cross a cavern.

- Ogres are another European creature of folklore (see Goblins in "Rumours"). Here in this adventure the brief details used to describe the Ogre generally match with the traditional image of the creatures as large, hideous monsters, although whether or not it has the traditional hairy head and beard is not mentioned. The majority of later depictions in *Fighting Fantasy* books (such as Livingstone's *City of Thieves* (1983) and *Island of the Lizard King* (1984)) tend to show them as bald and beardless. The most recent film interpretation of Ogres follows the bald and beardless look and is the title character of the various *Shrek* films (2001~2010), based on the picture book *Shrek!* (1990) by William Steig (1907~2003).

FURTHER INFORMATION


PUFFIN ORIGINAL
Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
A fighting fantasy gamebook in which YOU become the hero!
Complete with combat system, monster encyclopedia and score sheets


STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
A Fighting Fantasy Gamebook in which YOU are the hero!
SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION


STEVE JACKSON & IAN LIVINGSTONE
FIGHTING FANTASY
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
YOU ARE THE HERO!

AUTHORS: Steve Jackson &
Ian Livingstone
INTERIOR ARTIST: Russ Nicholson
PUBLISHED: August 27 1982
PUBLISHER: Puffin
GAMEBOOK NUMBER: 1
COVER ARTIST: Peter Andrew Jones
REPUBLISHED: June 3 2002
PUBLISHER: Wizard
GAMEBOOK NUMBER: 1
COVER ARTIST: Martin McKenna
REPUBLISHED: September 3 2009
PUBLISHER: Wizard
GAMEBOOK NUMBER: 1
COVER ARTIST: Martin McKenna
AVAILABILITY: In print.

3
At the river the hero negotiates the cost of passage to the other bank.

- Is the Ferryman seen here a nod to the Greek mythological character Charon, whose job it was to ferry the souls of the dead from the lands of the living to the world of the dead? One could attempt to build a case for the two parts of the book perhaps mirroring this division between the lands of the living (before the river) and the dead (after the river). This is because despite meeting none before the river crossing, the player encounters four different forms of the undead after crossing the river in the form of Zombies (see 122), a Vampire (see 17), a Wight (see 41), and a Ghoul (see 64)! Meanwhile, traditionally a coin would be placed in or on the mouth of the body of dead person to allow them to pay Charon for the crossing of the River Styx (see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #4). That would make the Ferryman's comment about inflation raising the price to 3 Gold Pieces even more amusing, rather than perhaps simply being perhaps a riff on the inflation the UK had suffered through in the late 1970s where prices rose by 25% per annum.

- The river was also the point at which Livingstone handed the story over to Jackson, who wrote everything north of the river as well as doing a polish of the whole book after it was pointed out by Puffin editor Philippa Dickinson that there was a noticeable change in writing style at that point.

11
The tunnel comes to a dead end which is under construction from a set of magical tools seemingly working by themselves.

- Livingstone and Jackson manage to combine two Disney films in one image, combining the work chant of the Dwarfs (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937) and the idea of magically animated tools (*Fantasia*, 1940). This is presumably the same copyrighted song that raised the eyebrows of editor Dickinson when reviewing the original draft of the book.

17
Using a makeshift cross, the hero forces the Vampire to back away before moving forward to stake it to death

- The appearance of a cross in the *Fighting Fantasy* series raises a couple of interesting points. Firstly it suggests that what we know of as the Roman method of execution, crucifixion, is in existence on the world of Titan, although were have yet to be presented with any evidence of such punishment being used – historical or otherwise – within the books of the range. Secondly, since the Vampire recoils from such a symbol, it also suggests that either Christianity, or some other religion which uses the cross symbol, is present on Titan. Without some sort of faith basis it would otherwise be simply two crossed sticks!
- What is now accepted as the generic Vampire template (fangs, bats, coffins et cetera), and the type that features in the world of *Fighting Fantasy*, has its origins in early 18th Century South-eastern Europe. While earlier folklore depicted Vampires as bloated or even as rotting corpses, it was the 1819 novel *The Vampyre* by John Polidori (1795~1821) that established the cliché of the charismatic and socially sophisticated Vampire. However it was *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker (1847~1912) that would bring the "definitive" Vampire to a greater audience and set the stage for the development of the concept throughout the 20th Century. Vampires would later feature more prominently in Keith Martin's *Vault of the Vampire* (1989) and *Revenge of the Vampire* (1995).

20
The hero finds themselves in a skirmish with four angry Dwarfs.

- Dwarfs are a feature of Nordic and Germanic mythologies and were considered to be nature spirits with a strong association with the earth. In early surviving texts they appears to be interchangeable with Black or Dark Elves, with a relationship to the concept of death marked by dark hair and a pale complexion. The Dwarfs featured here are clearly of the ilk developed from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson). Dwarfs would make a more substantial appearances in Livingstone's *The Forest of Doom* (1983), *Caverns of the Snow Witch*, *Crypt of the Sorcerer* (1987) and *Eye of the Dragon* (2005).

21
After defeating some Orcs, the hero investigates a locked, wooden chest.

- Orcs are a fairly cut and dried creation of Tolkien's, although academics may debate what creatures of folk lore or stories may have influenced their genesis. Despite this pretty concrete beginning, Tolkien himself hadn't fixed on an appearance or spelling for the creatures in his own works. They appear to be interchangeable with Goblins in *The Hobbit* (1937) and spelt "Ork" in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962). Since then they have been a staple of fantasy works, their modern appearance though is based more on their depiction in the table-top miniature wargaming series *Warhammer* (Games Workshop, 1983) than the description given by Tolkien. Orcs have yet to have a more significant appearance in *Fighting Fantasy* beyond stock creatures to fight, although they do feature in a memorable funeral sequence in *Battleblade Warrior* (Marc Gascoigne, 1988).

26
Faced by a huge Red Dragon, the hero puts to use the spell learnt from a spellbook.

- The words of Farrigo Di Maggio's fireball spell for use against Dragons are simply the words 'like fire, make fire, fire fire' written backwards!
- It is likely that, given Jackson and Livingstone are huge baseball fans, the name Di Maggio is a reference to Joe Di Maggio (1914~1999) who was a baseballer who played for the New York Yankees.
- The Dragon that appears here is the standard modern European image of a Dragon (for the Asian type of Dragon, see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #4). This version of Dragon evolved from the water-based serpent creatures of Greek and Roman mythology from which the word 'dragon' (*dracon* in Latin) has originated (see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #3 for the Greek). There are few recorded instances of Dragons in early European literature that can be specifically cited as Dragons, and the most notable of those few would probably be the Dragon fought by Beowulf in the epic Old English poem *Beowulf* (c.8th~11th Century). This encounter by Beowulf provides many of the characteristics that are now familiar facets of Dragons, namely breathing fire, collecting treasure and living underground. Which makes the encounter in this book somewhat lacking, as only two of those three features appear here! Red Dragons would reappear in *Crypt of the Sorcerer* and *Night Dragon* (Martin, 1993) amongst others.

27
The hero has obtained a magic sword with confers some stats bonuses.

- The concept of magic or enchanted swords, something of a staple of modern fantasy fiction, appear in literature as far back as *The Bible*, where God places a Cherubim on the east side of Eden with a flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve out (*Genesis 3*). Possibly the most famous sword is Excalibur, as wielded by King Arthur, although there is some debate as to whether or not the sword in question was magical in of itself, or simply of a magical origin.

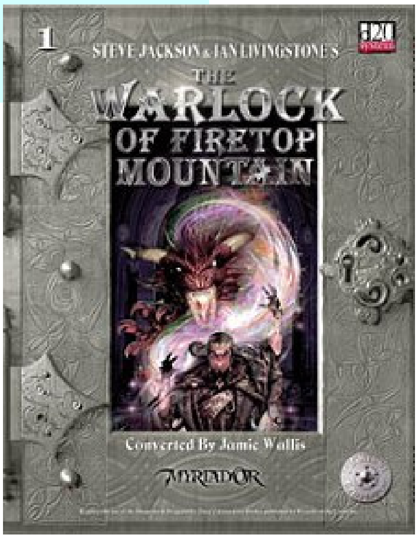
28
With the Giant dead, the hero searches the cavern and the body for treasure.

- Giants are another creature that are widely established in a variety of different Indo-European cultural mythologies, although the "standard" Giant of modern fantasy has probably evolved from the γίγαντες (*gigantes*) of Greek myth and Goliath (גָלְיָת) of *The Bible* (*1 Samuel 17*) and been filtered through folk tales, most notably *Jack and the Beanstalk*. This tale was first published in 1807 by Benjamin Tabart (1767~1833), but the story was probably based on an older oral tale. Giants of various kinds (Forest, Frost, Cave etc.) would later feature in several *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks including *Fangs of Fury* (Luke Sharp, 1989) and *Siege of Sardath* (Keith P. Phillips, 1992).

MORE THAN A LITTLE LOST?

So, YOU start off the gamebook in an unnamed village, one that is described as being two days hike from the foot of Firetop Mountain. But which peasant-filled village in Allansia is it?

According to the Myriador d20 conversion of this gamebook (Myriador, 2003), the village in question is named "Gilford", while the title "Haven" is applied to it in the map of the region presented in the only released edition of the official website's web-magazine *The Salamonis Gazette* (Fightingfantasy.com, 2003). The final say on the matter however goes to both issue #1 of *Warlock* magazine (Penguin, 1984) and *Return to Firetop Mountain* (Puffin, 1992), both of which identify the village as being Anvil.


1
STEVE JACKSON & IAN LIVINGSTONE'S
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
d20 SYSTEM
Converted By Jamie Wallis
MYRIADOR

31

The hero makes use of the Eye of the Cyclops to battle with the Warlock.

- Cyclops are the second form of Giant to feature in this adventure (see 28 for Giant and 51 for the third form of giant; Troll) and developed from Greek mythology and then through Roman mythology. Famously they feature in *Odyssey* (c.8th Century BC) attributed to the Greek poet Homer (c.8th Century BC), where Odysseus and his crew encounter the Cyclops Polyphemus and end up blinding him as part of making their escape. Modern fictional Cyclops creations include the Cyclops of the film *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), from television Turanga Leela of *Futurama*, the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica*, and Alpha Centuari of *Doctor Who*, and Wenlock and Mandeville, the official mascots of the 2012 Summer Olympics. Further *Fighting Fantasy* encounters with Cyclops take place in *Seas of Blood* (Andrew Chapman, 1985) and *Curse of the Mummy* (Jonathan Green, 1995) amongst others.
- Quite why the Eye of the Cyclops causes the portrait of Zagor pain here, or how it kills the real Zagor later on is unexplained. The one possible link is the fable associated with the Cyclops. When they were two-eyed creatures they traded one of their eyes with the god Hades in order to gain the ability to see the future. As per usual in such fables, they did not gain quite what they wished. Their ability to see the future was limited to being able to see their own demise.

the SALAMONIS GAZETTE
A Fighting Fantasy™ Web-magazine
NO.1
Vol 1 No 1
Quarterly
Welcome...
NEW: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
With Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson
Monsters from the Firetop Mountain
Secrets of Mapping
Allansia maps: Firetop Mountain
The Quill
Yaztromo's Scrolls
Latest news
Competition
And lots more...
...to the world of Fighting Fantasy™

32

Throwing the cheese to the Giant Rats, the hero makes a hasty escape from the room.

- Although the origins of cheese are obscured by the passage of time, it is understood through the writings of Gaius Plinius Secundus (23~79 AD), better known as Pliny the Elder, that the making of cheese was already a sophisticated enterprise by the time the Roman Empire came into being. The earliest archaeological evidence for cheese making is from Egypt and dates from around 2000 BC. Cows (who despite various references to beef and leather don't actually appear until *Howl of the Werewolf*), Sheep (members of the player's crew can be turned into them in *Seas of Blood*), and Goats (again with the player's crew) all exist on Titan, so we can probably safely assume that the cheese here is made from the milk of one of those animals.
- Rats have the distinction for being the first of many, many real creatures to have 'Giant' counterparts in the world of Titan (see also 251). For those who find the creatures distasteful, you can relax in knowledge that they can't get very large (up to around a weight of 500 grams). That said, a larger version (several times bigger than modern species at about 6 kilograms) did exist on the island of Timor, dying out between 1000 to 2000 years ago, with even larger rodents (of up to about 350kg) in existence during the Pliocene period. Giant Rats have gone on to feature in *City of Thieves*, *Legend of the Shadow Warriors* (Stephen Hand, 1991), *Deathmoor* (Robin Waterfield, 1994), and *Eye of the Dragon*, as well as several issues of *Warlock* amongst other appearances. Outside of *Fighting Fantasy*, Giant Rats have been a feature of much Sherlock Holmes inspired fiction thanks to a line from *The Adventure of Sussex Vampire* (1924) that mentions one, and they have also appeared in the Tom Baker *Doctor Who* story *The Talons of Weng-Chiang* (1977), and as the 'Rodents of Unusual Size' in the book *The Princess Bride* (1973).

36

The door opens to reveal a room filled with disgusting refuse and an older man who leaps at the hero.

- It has been suggested that the "wild-haired old man" the hero meets here is the "Wild Man" Eric Rune-axe that is encounterd by the hero in *Phantoms of Fear* (Waterfield, 1987), a character who "got lost in something called the Maze of Zagor and gave up his adventuring ways."

38

Going through the larder of the Werewolf leads to the discovery of some pickled eggs.

- Werewolves have featured regularly in *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks, appearing in *The Forest of Doom*, *The Shamutanti Hills* (Jackson, 1983), *Caverns of the Snow Witch*, *The Warrior's Way* (Chapman & Martin Allan, 1986), *Crypt of the Sorcerer*, *Armies of Death* (Livingstone, 1988), *Vault of the Vampire*, *Spellbreaker* (Green, 1993), and *Revenge of the Vampire* amongst others, whilst featuring most heavily in Green's 2007 *Fighting Fantasy* adventure *Howl of the Werewolf* (see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #2 for further Werewolf information). Like Vampires, Werewolves feature throughout much of European folklore with numerous ways to either become one, or to be identified as one. The version here, like with Vampires (see 17), is heavily influenced by modern interpretations of Werewolf lore. Notable examples of modern Werewolf tales that might have influenced the writers include the classic film *The Wolf Man* (1941), *The Wolfen* by Whitley Strieber (1978), and the film *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). Since then they have gone on to feature prominently in films such as *Teen Wolf* (1985), *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans* (2009), and *The Wolfman* (2010).

41

The hero takes on a Wight in battle, the creature proving to be a formidable enemy.

- Wights are derived from the Norse nature spirits *Vættir*, the word originally used to describe a small *living* being as opposed to the *undead* creature of modern fantasy writing. The most significant influences on the modern interpretation of the creature would be the Barrow-Wights of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Wights of *Dungeons & Dragons*, the latter of these notably playing up the ability to drain a creature's life through touch. Wights count *Masks of Mayhem* (Waterfield, 1986) and *The Keep of the Lich-Lord* (Dave Morris & Jamie Thomson, 1991) among their reappearances.

50

Having defeated a creature in combat, the hero discovers a key in a small pouch.

- Keys or other items representing a means of progressing in an adventure or preventing further passage for those without them, had already become a standard feature of computer games by this point in time. Text-based adventure games had been in development on mainframes since the 1960s, although it wouldn't be until the late 1970s that they would take off. The more popular titles influenced similar games developed for home computers at the start of the 1980s such as *Zork* (1980). Later books in the *Fighting Fantasy* series, particularly those by Livingstone, would use other objects, usually numbered, as a similar means of gauging progression through the books. In an attempt to avoid this, other later authors, such as Stephen Hand and Jonathan Green, would instead use codewords to determine the knock-on effect of previous choices on future decisions.

51

By the use of a potion, the hero escapes the view of a Troll and avoids combat with the creature.

- Trolls derive from Norse mythology, where initially the term was a derogative name for Giants (see 28). As the mythology spread through Scandinavia the Troll became a creature in its own right, picking up the characteristics that helped differentiate it from the Giants of its origins. These included being slow, of limited intelligence, man-eaters, and prone to turning to stone when exposed to sunlight. The modern fantasy Troll then is heavily influenced by Tolkien's interpretation of this mythology. However, based on the illustration of the Troll (at paragraph 348), it appears that in this case it is the *Dungeons & Dragons* version of a Troll that has held sway. The Trolls in that role-playing game are generally described as skinny humanoids with long noses, which matches the illustration well. This interpretation of Trolls appears to be based on the appearance of a Troll from the Poul Anderson (1926~2001) novel *Three Hearts and Three Lions* (1961). However, despite this similarity of appearance, there are some differences between *D&D* and *Fighting Fantasy* Trolls. Unlike their RPG ancestors, most of the types of Troll on Titan are not solitary, being able to form communities of their own or partake in wider civilization, as evidenced by the Trolls who serve as part of the Blacksand Guard (first appearing as such in *City of Thieves*). Nor are they able to regenerate and finally they are not afraid of fire. Trolls of various geographical origins (Cave, Hill etc.) have recurred throughout the *Fighting Fantasy* series, for example appearing in *Slaves of the Abyss* (Mason & Steve Williams, 1988) and *Master of Chaos* (Martin, 1991). Modern appearances of Trolls occur in the form of the Troll from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) by J.K. Rowling (b.1965) and the 1986 film *Troll*.

64

The hero is dead from a fight with a Ghoul and it is left to the Ghoul to begin devouring the body.

- Ghouls appear to derive from Arabian folklore, with the first recorded appearance of the term, ghūl (غول) which literally means 'demon', in *One Thousand and One Nights* (كتاب ألف ليلة وليلة), a collection of tales that receives first mention in the 10th Century. The Arabian Ghoul is a creature that dwells in burial grounds and the desert, and can take on the form of animals in order to lure away unsuspecting travellers to kill and eat them. Their first mention in English is in the novel *Vathek* (1786) by William Beckford (1760~1844), which matches closely with the Arabian depiction. While most modern interpretations of the creature, including those of *Fighting Fantasy*, feature them as undead creatures that live in graveyards and feed on the flesh of the dead, similar to their Arabian folklore origins, other modern depictions of them include them as a nocturnal subterranean race in the works of H.P. Lovecraft (1890~1937) such as *Pickman's Model* (1927), as small ape-like creatures in *The Graveyard Book* (2008) by Neil Gaiman (b.1960), and as harmless things that live in the homes of witches and wizards in the *Harry Potter* series of books. They appear quite often in the *Fighting Fantasy* series, including titles like *Midnight Rogue* (Graeme Davis, 1987) and *Deathmoor*.
- This is one of just three instant death paragraphs in the book, one of the smallest counts for any book in the series.

80

The door opens to reveal a large boathouse within which are various boats at different stages of construction being worked on by Skeletons.

- "Living" Skeletons are a long established piece of imagery used for illustrating the abstract concept of death, one that seems to have largely arisen during the Middle Ages as a reaction to major events such as the Black Death (which peaked between 1348 and 1350). An example of this is *The Triumph of Death* (c.1562), a painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525~1569), which depicts an army of Skeletons marching through a ruined medieval landscape and killing people in a variety of ways. In terms of influence on the *Fighting Fantasy* monster, the obvious source is the first edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons* RPG where Skeletons were one of the first creatures introduced. Unsurprisingly, given this pedigree, they have featured in numerous *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, even appearing on the covers of *Sword of the Samurai* (Mark Smith & Jamie Thomson, 1986), *The Keep of the Lich-Lord*, and *Revenge of the Vampire*.

89

Heading through the gap in the north wall of the passageway, the hero descends the stairs.

- When reproducing the gamebook in two parts for *Warlock* magazine this paragraph became the point of division, the adventure picking up at the bottom of the stairs in the second part. The division of the book material was simply achieved by keeping all references to events prior to this point in the game, that were numbered less than 274, numbered the same as they were in the book. For example, reference 71 in the book remains reference 71 in the magazine. Any references related to material prior to this point with a greater paragraph number were then used to plug the gaps left behind by the majority of the later material moving into part two. While in general this worked okay, on occasion it did lead to some unfortunate options such as in part one where reference 115 has one choice leading to 114 and in part two where 307 links to 308 and 308 to 307. The one exception to this shifting of references was the key combination totals, as these references remained the same as in the book. Which meant that the player needed *both* issues with them when attempting to open Zagor's treasure chest.

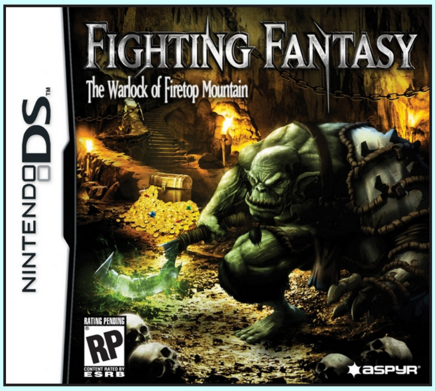
105

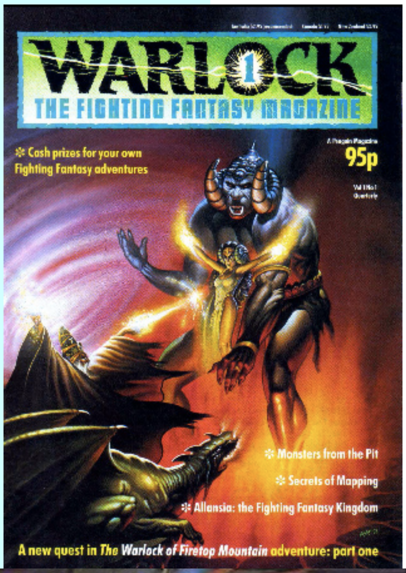
The hero looks through their backpack for an item that

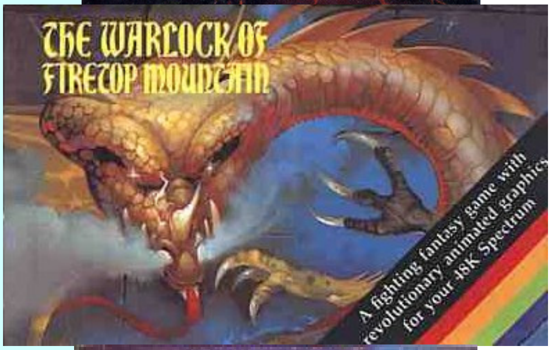
A TALE OF MULTIPLE WARLOCKS

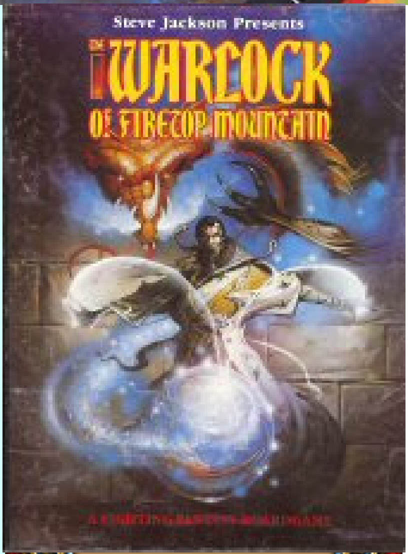
As the first title for the series, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* has always been something of an ambassador for the range. Therefore it comes as no surprise than when *Fighting Fantasy* has been adapted for other media formats, this first book has usually been the one to test the waters...

Beyond the book, of which there are twelve different printings to date (seven from Puffin and five from Wizard Books), *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* has been adapted as a two-part adventure in Penguin Books' *Warlock* magazine (1984), as a maze format computer game for the ZX Spectrum by Crystal Computing (1984), a boardgame designed by Steve Jackson for Games Workshop (1986), as an eBook by Proporta for the Palm Pilot (2003), as a d20 module from Myriador (2003), as a mobile phone game in Japan from Digital Studio (2003), as a Nintendo DS RPG game from Big Blue Bubble/Aspyr Media (2009), as an iPhone application from Big Blue Bubble (2009), and more recently as a download for the Kindle from Worldweaver Ltd. (2011).


NINTENDO DS
FIGHTING FANTASY
The Warlock of Firetop Mountain
RATING PENDING
RP
aspyr


WARLOCK 1
THE FIGHTING FANTASY MAGAZINE
Cash prizes for your own Fighting Fantasy adventures
A Penguin Magazine
95p
Monsters from the Pit
Secrets of Mapping
Allansia: the Fighting Fantasy Kingdom
A new quest in The Warlock of Firetop Mountain adventure: part one


THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
A fighting fantasy game with revolutionary animated graphics for your 48K Spectrum


Steve Jackson Presents
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

FIGHTING FANTASY
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
NEW GAME
CONTINUE
MORE GAMES

they can use against the Warlock.

- Is the Y-shaped stick that the player finds meant to be used for dowsing, the form of divination usually used to locate water or other objects of interest beneath the ground? Dowsing appears to originated in the 15th Century, as by the 16th it was being condemned as occultism. The dowser is supposed to walk about the target area with the stick which twitches or dips downwards when something is to be found underground. Several tests in various countries since the 1940s have proven that the possibility of finding something via dowsing is no better than chance. Interestingly, this Y-shaped stick is the only item on the list of objects here that isn't useful either for fighting the Warlock or at some point earlier in the adventure. Is it meant to be a red herring item or were there originally plans for it to have a greater purpose?

122

Recovering from unconsciousness, the hero awakens to find themselves in a room that is currently occupied by four Zombies and a corpse.

- Zombies are essentially a feature of the religion known as West African Vodun which was transmitted via the traffic of slaves to Haiti and then to America which it is known as New Orleans Voodoo. The Zombies would be controlled by a bokor (sorcerer) as they would have no will of their own. In the 1980s ethnobotanist Wade Davis studied the Zombie phenomenon in Haiti and concluded that Zombies were actually living people held in a death-like state through the application of powerful drugs. Given one of the drugs Davis cited for this behaviour was tetrodotoxin (TTX), his claims have been in general dismissed as the drug does not produce Zombie-like symptoms. But it is from Haiti that popular culture first really began drawing on the Zombie concept for material. Despite hungry undead featuring in older tales, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (earliest versions of which date from around 2150-2000 BC), it is W.B. Seabrook's (1884~1945) novel *The Magic Island* (1929) that is the first brush popular culture has with the concept. The book is the adventures of the narrator in Haiti, where they encounter Voodoo cults and the resurrected dead who are referred to as "Zombi". While the concept of Zombies began appearing from that point on in various media and a variety of forms, it wasn't really until George A. Romero's (b.1940) 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* that the modern concept of the Zombie was realised. Like Skeletons (see 80), Zombies were a monster introduced to *Dungeons & Dragons* when it began in 1974 and this version probably had a large influence on the Zombies presented here. What also might have been sources of ideas for the writers is the then recent batch of Zombie films released which included the sequel to Romero's film, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Zombi 2* (1979), and *Hell of the Living Dead* (1981). The now standard cliché of Zombies thirsting after Human brains, along with the inclusion of "Brains!" as part of their vocabulary, would come later in the 1985 comedy-horror *Return of the Living Dead*. The last decade has seen resurgence of interest in Zombie-based material through films, such as *28 Days Later*, *Resident Evil* (both 2002), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and *Zombieland* (2009), books such as Seth

Grahame-Smith's (b.1976) *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), and video games such as *Left 4 Dead* (2008) and *Killing Floor* (2009). Like many of the creatures featured in this particular gamebook, they recur throughout the series in titles such as *Portal of Evil* (Darvill-Evans, 1989) and *Moonrunner* (Hand, 1992).

131

The four tiny men explain to the hero their feelings of isolation at being some of the few lawful beings inside Firetop Mountain.

• The Maze of Zagor begins at reference 197, when the second portcullis of the adventure blocks the way back (which is presumably later resolved by the use of Zagor's book, found in the treasure chest, that controls Firetop Mountain). It is important to note that the maze presented here is a true maze and not a labyrinth, despite many English speakers using the two words as synonyms. A labyrinth has no side branches or dead ends, being simply a twisted single route to a destination. This maze has two dead ends and another four which teleport the player to another part of the labyrinth – presumably a ploy on the part of maze designer Jackson (who planned this section of the book) to make it seem bigger than it really is. The gamble must have worked if the number of letters asking for help in *Warlock* is anything to go by! Unfortunately for the lost, the directions offered by the men in this paragraph cover the only bit of the maze that is hard to get lost in (there are no teleports and only one secret panel in the vicinity of this starting point, with the panel unable to be reached by following these directions anyway). Meanwhile, given that this is a maze, Jackson can't resist throwing in an encounter with a Minotaur (see 179 for more details), just as occurs in the mythical story of the Athenian hero Theseus who is placed in the labyrinth of King Daedalus of Minos (which *is* a maze based on the descriptions and *not* a labyrinth). This story is most famously recounted in Ovid's (43 BC~c.17 AD) *Metamorphoses* (8 AD).

133

The hero is rendered unconscious by a rock falling from the ceiling.

• For the first and only time in the range, a piece of incidental art (in this case Russ Nicholson's picture of a bunch of treasure) is spread across two pages.

143

As the hero takes a moment to eat a meal they are attacked by a Giant Sandworm.

• Sandworms are a feature of UK beaches, although better known by the title of Lugworms (*Arenicola marina*) and are sometimes used as bait. They usually reach about 23 centimetres, although other species in the US can grow to 31 centimetres. These are probably a nod to the classic science fiction novel *Dune* (Frank Herbet, 1965) where the planet Arrakis is home to these giant creatures. The fantasy Giant Sandworms have since reappeared in *Temple of Terror* (Livingstone, 1985), *Phantoms of Fear*, and *Eye of the Dragon* amongst others.

• According to the reproduction of Livingstone's hand drawn map for his part of the gamebook in the additional celebratory section at the end of the 25th Anniversary Edition of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (Wizard, 2007), the Giant Sandworm encountered here was originally meant to be a Giant Crab. Livingstone got his chance to finally include one in *Island of the Lizard King* and they have since appeared in *The Dervish Stone* (Paul Struth, 1984), *Demons of the Deep* (Jackson (US), 1986), *Fangs of Fury*, *Magehunter* (Mason, 1995), and *Bloodbones* (Green, 2006) as well as a few other titles.

179

The hero enters a room where the floor is covered in broken pottery only to be set upon by a Minotaur.

• The Minotaur (Μῑνώταυρος) derives from Greek mythology, the name meaning 'bull of Minos', and was supposedly the product of a union between the wife of King Minos, Pasiphaë, and a bull. After it was born and nursed, it was discovered that Minotaur had no natural source of food leading to it feeding on human flesh. To deal with the creature, a labyrinth was designed to hold it and Minotaur consigned to live at the centre of the construction. At the time of the myths origin, 'Minotaur' was a proper noun, the individual name of this particular creature. Since then it has become a generic term for bull-headed humanoids in fantasy fiction, such as *Dungeons & Dragons* where they are treated as a race. In *Fighting Fantasy*, which follows the *Dungeons & Dragons* interpretation, they have also appeared in *Deathtrap Dungeon* (Livingstone, 1984), *The Warrior's Way*, and *Daggers of Darkness* amongst others. Modern versions of this tale include the film *Minotaur* (2006) and the opera *The Minotaur* (2008).

188

The man begins to change into a Wererat and the hero is forced to engage him in a fight to the death.

• Wererats possibly have their origin in the Japanese mythology of (妖怪) *yokai* ('demon', 'spirit'), where there are references to "Goblin rats". However, the most likely source that the writers are drawing on here is once again *Dungeons & Dragons*, where Wererats were introduced as one of several forms of "lycanthropes" (even though the word refers to Wolves). Later on they were renamed as Nezumi (鼠, which is literally the Japanese for 'rat') in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* handbook *Oriental Adventures* (1985). They make appearances in *Return to Firetop Mountain* and *Howl of the Werewolf* amongst others. Outside of *Fighting Fantasy* Wererats have since featured in the books of the Anita Blake series (1993~present) by Laurell K. Hamilton (b.1963), the comic *Gold Digger* (1991~present) by Fred Perry (b.1969), and the manga series *Furūtsu Basuketto* (フルーツバスケット) *'Fruits Basket'* (1999~2006) by (高屋 奈月) Takaya Natsuki (b.1973).

192

A possible key combination for the treasure chest of the Warlock.

• Aside from the map (see 143), the celebratory section also contains various titbits of information ('20 Little-known Facts About Fighting Fantasy') about this, the first book in the range. One of those was that when Jackson and Livingstone's individual parts of the book were collated into one tale, it was found the adventure totalled 399 references. To make the adventure up to an even 400, Jackson inserted another key combination reference. While this last minute reference does lead to the correct end sequence of the book, it is not possible to get 192 from any combination of the keys found throughout the gamebook, making this reference impossible to reach without cheating.

193

The hero enters a room that features a statue of a Cyclops.

• The reproduction of Livingstone's map indicates that a further room, to the north, was originally planned and *that* room was to have contained the Cyclops statue.

199

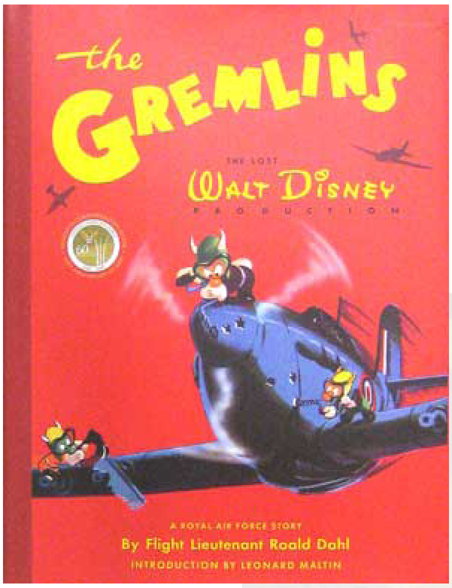
The tunnel widens into a large cavern at the centre of which is a smouldering fire and also two threatening Cavemen.

- The ‘Caveman’ as seen here is based on an incorrect understanding of how Neanderthal people lived before recorded history. It is a long standing stereotype, being depicted in material dating back to at least the Middle Ages (5th~15th Century AD). More recently they have featured in such things as the “Earth’s Children” series of novels by Jean M. Auel (b.1936) of which *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (1980) is the most famous title, comic *Cavewoman* (1993~2006) by Budd Root (b.1958), the 1981 film *Caveman* starring Ringo Starr (b.1940) and Barbara Bach (b.1947), and the UK television series *Cavegirl* (2002~2003) and the US series *Cavemen* (2007).

218
The hero is on the south bank of a large cavern through which flows a river.

- What should be this paragraph marks the end of the Wizard Books “Sample Adventure” edition. Instead of the expected paragraph, readers are told:

> *Congratulations, adventurer, you have made it. You have reached the river and it is here that your adventure must end.* Or does it? *For the truth is that there is still much to explore. There are more foes to vanquish, more keys to discover and more secrets to be revealed. As it is, you are only halfway there. Zagor still reigns supreme within the rocky fortress of Firetop Mountain.*
>
> *So, for now, you have one last choice to make.*
>
> *You may leave the mountain now, never to return, and go back to your everyday life. If so, close the book and forget you were ever here.*
>
> Or *if you dare, you may carry on with your adventure, hoping one day to defeat the great Warlock Zagor at his own game! Only the truly courageous or downright stupid chose to take this route, and if you are one of these people all you have to do is to buy THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN from any leading bookstore and turn to reference* **218**. *It will be like you never left!*
>
> *But, for now you must leave. Will you be back? The choice is yours!*



Of note in this edition is that the reference with the Dragonfire spell (296) is missing the italics from the book title as well as the parchment art around the outside of the spell.

251
The passageway approaches a river and while the hero is standing on the bank of the river they are attacked by three Giant Bats.

- Giant Bats are another real world creature scaled upwards for the world of Titan (see 32). In the real world the largest bats belong to the family *Pteropus*, commonly known as either Fruit Bats or Flying Foxes. The *Pteropus vampyrus* is the largest of the species in the family, with a wingspan of up to 1.83 metres. Despite the size of this species, and the other slightly smaller species of giant Bat in the same family, they are not predators. They feed on fruit, nectar, pollen, and blossoms, a factor that explains their restriction to tropical parts of the planet than can provided abundant sources of these foods. Also of note is the fact that they do not possess echolocation used by other families of Bats to hunt and catch their prey. Giant Bats reappear in *The Shamutanti Hills* (Jackson, 1983), *Vault of the Vampire*, and *Stormslayer* (Green, 2009) amongst others.

356
The old man seems to change his form until he is revealed to be the Warlock Zagor who is ready for battle.

- Zagor is the first of only two recurring villains in the *Fighting Fantasy* series (the other being Count Reiner Heydrich of the two Vampire adventures). We learn next to nothing about him in the course of this adventure beyond his being able to appear young or old, his power being contained in a pack of cards, and an apparent kryptonite-like weakness to the Eye of the Cyclops (see 31). It wouldn’t be until the publication of *Titan – The Fighting Fantasy World* (Gascoigne, 1986) and *Creature of Havoc* (Jackson, 1986) that the Warlock would get an extended background, filling in his life with details relating to his part in the ‘Demonic Three’ that included Zharradan Marr and Balthus Dire. Further detail would also arise with the publication of the two sequels *Return to Firetop Mountain* and *Legend of Zagor* (Livingstone, 1993) as well as the quartet of novels under the *Zagor Chronicles* banner by Livingstone and Carl Sargent (1993 & 1994).

377
The Winged Gremlin launches to attack the hero while the old man makes his escape.

- Gremlins have their origins in the world of aircraft, with the earliest written record showing early appearances as Royal Air Force (RAF) slang in the 1920s. Gremlins are then a modern folklore invention, equal opportunity tricksters who spent their time sabotaging aircraft and thus were an explanation for otherwise inexplicable equipment failures onboard aircraft. They became a well-known and widespread concept within the RAF by the time of the Second World War (1939~1945). They were popularized outside the air force by writer Roald Dahl (1916~1990) with his first children’s book *The Gremlins* (1943) that told the tale of a group of Gremlins that sabotage RAF aircraft due to their woodland home being demolished to make way for an aircraft factory. They are eventually convinced to help repair rather than sabotage the aircraft. The book was the basis of a planned Walt Disney (1901~1966) film that was eventually abandoned due to rights issues. This form of Gremlin is most famously known through an episode of *The Twilight Zone* entitled *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet* (1963), in which William Shatner (b.1931) plays a man who, having suffered a recent nervous breakdown, travels on an aeroplane. While in flight he sees an ape-like Gremlin fooling about with the mechanics of the wing of the plane. This episode was later remade into a segment of *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983) with John Lithgow (b.1945) as the nervous air traveller who sees the Gremlin (this time looking more akin to a Goblin) on the wing of the plane. Amongst many appearance in the *Fighting Fantasy* series, Gremlins also feature in *The Forest of Doom*, *Daggers of Darkness*, and *Tower of Destruction* (Martin, 1991).

396
The hero approaches a locked door with two keyholes. Do they have any keys with which to open it?

- Amusingly, the paragraph explains what happens if the player has some keys and which paragraph to turn to before even considering that the player may have reached this point of the adventure without any keys (which is certainly possible if improbable)!

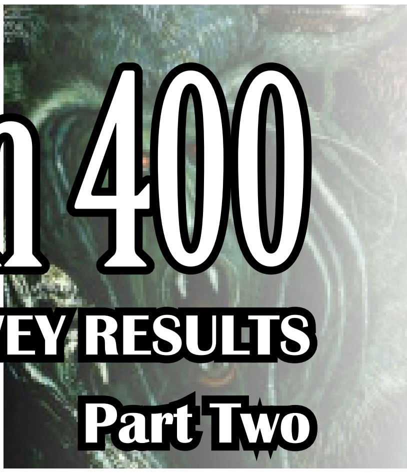
400
The hero’s quest is over as they gaze upon the chest filled with the Warlock’s treasure.

- For the only time in the series, the concluding paragraph begins with a full page stating simply that “Your Quest is Over”. Given that this sits inside a copy of the Adventure Sheet scroll illustration that has been squeezed onto one page, it appears perhaps that when it came to laying out the book that one more page was needed to separate the 400th reference from the 399th in order to accommodate Nicholson’s picture of the treasure chest on a left-hand page.

Turn to Paragraph 400

THE FIGHTING FANTAZINE 2010 SURVEY RESULTS

Part Two

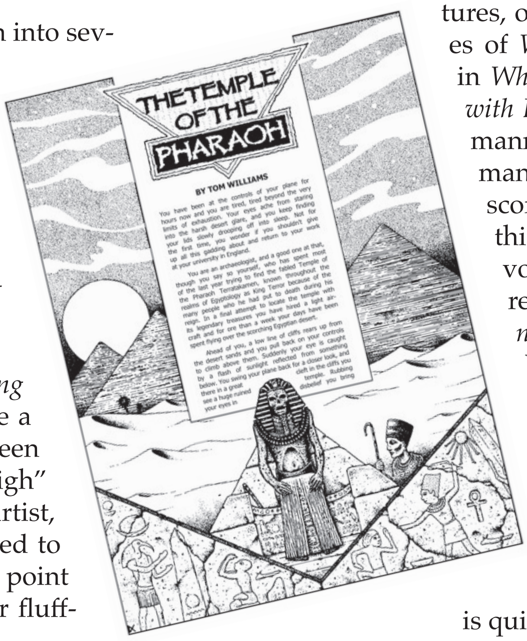


Last issue, we counted down to reveal Howl of the Werewolf to be YOUR favourite Fighting Fantasy gamebook of all time. But what about your favourite writer and artist? Alexander Ballingall covers these burning questions (and others) in the second half of the survey results...

Absolutely eons ago, back in *Fighting Fantazine* 3, we asked you to rate or comment on everything from writers to the mini-adventures to this very fanzine.

This second part of the results is broken into several parts. The first covers your votes on the rest of the printed *Fighting Fantasy* output, the second is your wish list for future material, and the third covers your views of this very fanzine. Lastly we look at who YOU felt made the most influential or important contribution to the *Fighting Fantasy* series.

With the votes on the rest of the *Fighting Fantasy* output, you were asked to give a single vote for each title, scoring it between "bottom of the barrel" 1s and "flying high" 10s. With the creature, villain, picture, artist, and writer votes, 3 points were awarded to those listed 1st, 2 points to 2nd, and 1 point to those placed 3rd. So without further fluffing around...



THE TEMPLE OF THE PHARAOH

BY TOM WILLIAMS

You have been at the controls of your plane for hours now and you are tired, tired beyond the very limits of exhaustion. Your eyes ache from staring into the harsh desert glare, and you keep finding your lids slowly drooping off into sleep. Not for the first time, you wonder if you shouldn't give up all this gadding about and return to your work at your university in England.

You are an archaeologist, and a good one at that, though you say so yourself, who has spent most of the last year trying to find the fabled Temple of the Pharaoh Terratakamen, known throughout the realms of Egyptology as King Terror because of the many people who he had put to death during his reign. In a final attempt to locate the temple with its legendary treasures you have hired a light aircraft and for ore than a week your days have been spent flying over the scorching Egyptian desert.

Ahead of you, a low line of cliffs rears up from the desert sands and you pull back on your controls to climb above them. Suddenly your eye is caught by a flash of sunlight reflected from something
below. You swing your plane back for a closer look, and
there in a great cleft in the cliffs you
see a huge ruined temple. Rubbing
your eyes in disbelief you bring

Mini-adventures

15	Rogue Mage	36.7%
	Deadline to Destruction	
	Dungeon of Justice	
12=	The Dervish Stone	50.0%
	The Temple of the Pharaoh	
	The Land of Changes	
	Fortress Throngard	
	The Floating City	
	The Temple of Testing	
	Caverns of the Snow Witch	
	The Dark Usurper	
4=	Eye of the Dragon	60.0%
	The Dark Chronicles of Anakendis	
	In Search of the Lost Land	
1=	The House of Hell	70.0%

First up, it is the mini *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, of which almost all appeared in the pages of *Warlock* magazine (the others appeared in *White Dwarf*, *Proteus*, and the book *Dicing with Dragons*). They score in a fairly uniform manner, although Graeme Davis' *Rogue Mage* manages to do quite poorly with a lowly score of 36.7%. One does have to wonder if this is because this is the adventure most voters were familiar with, having been reprinted in *The Fighting Fantasy 10th Anniversary Yearbook*, while the issues of *Warlock* et cetera the rest appear in are harder to come by copies of.

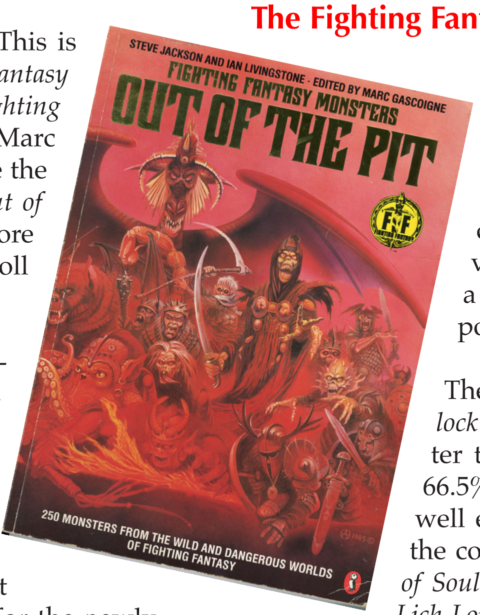
The shorter version of *Caverns of the Snow Witch* doesn't do as well as the other shorter adventures turned into full-length books, perhaps a result of the artwork of Duncan Smith which is quite different to the art of the final book.

FF-RPG & AFF

13	Beyond the Shadow of a Dream	30.0%
12	Deathtrap on Legs	45.0%
11	The Dreaming Sands	55.0%
	Battle of Grey Rock	
9=	The Ring of Seven Terrors	70.0%
8	Fighting Fantasy - The Role-playing Game	73.6%
7	Allansia	74.0%
6	Dungeoneer	77.0%
5	Blacksand!	78.2%
4	The Tower of Hades	80.0%
3	The Riddling Reaver	84.2%
2	Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World	85.7%
1	Fighting Fantasy Monsters - Out of the Pit	92.5%

On to the rest of the adventure output! This is a combination of the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* books and manuals, and the various *Fighting Fantasy - The Role-playing Game* materials. Marc Gascoigne's two source books prove to be the pick of the bunch, especially his first, *Out of the Pit*, which scores the highest overall score out of *any Fighting Fantasy* book in this poll with 92.5%.

His three later books for *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* fill out the middle of the pack, meaning that most of the earlier RPG system adventures or manuals gather at the bottom of the poll. Of this older material, only the short adventure *The Tower of Hades* and the book *The Riddling Reaver* end up doing well here. This does suggest that both titles *might* be worth adapting for the newly revised *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* system...


STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE · EDITED BY MARC GASCOIGNE
FIGHTING FANTASY MONSTERS
OUT OF THE PIT
250 MONSTERS FROM THE WILD AND DANGEROUS WORLDS OF FIGHTING FANTASY

Novels

7	Demonlord	50.0%
6	Firestorm	55.0%
5	Darkthrone	57.5%
4	Skullcrag	60.0%
3	The Trolltooth Wars	63.3%
2	Demonstealer	65.0%
1	Shadowmaster	66.7%

A smaller poll now, with only seven novels to vote on. The first three titles published take a clear lead, Ian Livingstone and Marc Gascoigne's joint effort taking out first place. Meanwhile, it seems being part of a linked series has *not* helped the other four titles. Of these only *Skullcrag* does okay and this is perhaps because this is the one book of the four that is partially set in Allansia (the other three are set entirely in the world of Amarillia from *Casket of Souls* and *Legend of Zagor*). The low scores overall, all the novels placing below the average of the gamebooks at 67.8%, suggest that some effort would have to be put into future straight fiction attempts to tempt fans to part with their hard earned wealth...

Miscellaneous

Market Mayhem	60.0%
The Warlock of Firetop Mountain 25th Anniversary Edition	70.0%
Casket of Souls	72.5%
In Search of the Mungies' Gold	75.0%
The Tasks of Tantalon	81.4%
The Sorcery Spell Book	82.9%
The Fighting Fantasy 10th Anniversary Yearbook	84.0%
The Fighting Fantasy Poster Book	90.0%

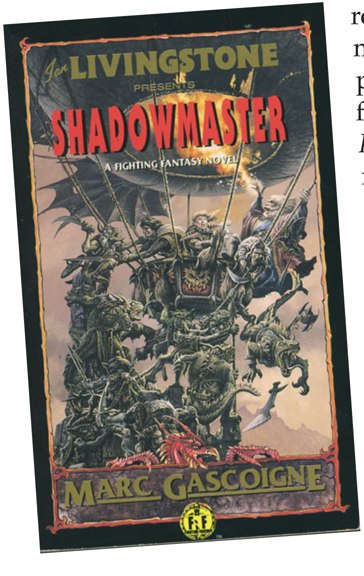
And finally on to the rest of the *Fighting Fantasy* publications, which are a grab-bag of oddities. There are no rankings here given the nature of this section, covering the two boardgame-type adventures, two puzzle books, a spell book, a year book, an anniversary title, and a poster book.

The 25th anniversary edition of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* does marginally better than the original edition (which scored 66.5% in the poll). *The Task of Tantalon* scores well enough to place 3rd if ranked alongside the core gamebooks of the range, while *Casket of Souls* only manages to equal *The Keep of the Lich-Lord* for 22nd place.

Interestingly, *The Fighting Fantasy Poster Book* scores the second highest score out of all the publications and, combined with the score for *Out of the Pit*, suggests that publications revolving around the art and monsters of the gamebooks are popular with fans. Perhaps a coffee table book dedicated *Fighting Fantasy* artwork would be well received?

Meanwhile, Gascoigne is back with *The Fighting Fantasy 10th Anniversary Yearbook* where he manages to bring further depth to the world of Titan, scoring well enough to beat almost all the gamebooks.

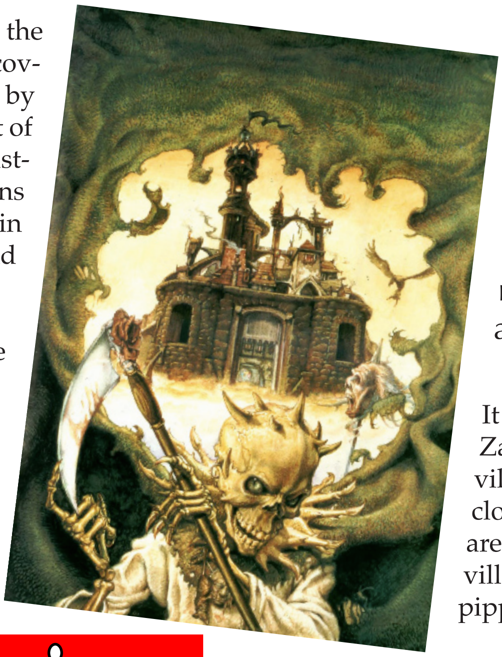
And on to the favourites...



Favourite Cover

Bloodbones
Forest of Doom (Wizard)
Phantoms of Fear
9= **Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World**
Slaves of the Abyss
7= **Deathtrap Dungeon** (Puffin)
Curse of the Mummy
Daggers of Darkness
4= **City of Thieves** (Puffin)
3 **The Forest of Doom** (Puffin)
2 **House of Hell** (Puffin)
1 **Legend of the Shadow Warriors**

Bubbling under: **Temple of Terror** (Puffin), **Battleblade Warrior**, and **Night Dragon**.



Of the seventy plus books published under the *Fighting Fantasy* banner, only thirty of the covers it seems were deemed worth voting for by fans in the survey. What is interesting is that of those titles voted for, the top twelve books listed above break down into the contributions of only six artists: Terry Oakes, Ian Miller, Iain McCaig, Les Edwards, Martin McKenna, and Christos Achilleos.

The stand out artist here would have to be Iain McCaig, three of his four covers for the Puffin editions appearing in the list, his Shape Changer snatching third place. Notably, this cover for *The Forest of Doom* was "reimagined" by Martin McKenna in 2002 and that version also makes it onto this list.

Favourite Interior

House of Hell (236)
House of Hell (181)
Island of the Lizard King (350)
2= **Deathtrap Dungeon** (74)
1 **The Warlock of Firetop Mountain** (275)

Given that each gamebook has over twenty internal illustrations, not counting maps or the smaller filler pictures, it was not surprising that a great many different pictures were nominated for the best internal piece of art with very few getting more than one nomination. That said, the above five pictures all gained *more than* one vote! A "bubbling under" list of those pictures that gained one nomination therefore would be pointlessly long.

Despite this, it is worth noting that *House of Hell* has one further nominated picture (the later removed 264 illustration of the human sacrifice), *Deathtrap Dungeon* has another two illustrations nominated (299 & 326) and *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* two others also (106 & 122). This suggests that these three books did fairly well in terms of art in the eyes of fans.

Taking top place then is Russ Nicholson's memorable depiction of a Ghoul, followed by Iain McCaig's menacing Mirror Demon, Alan Langford's wild girl with a Sabre-tooth Tiger, and Tim Sell's Hell Demon and Zombie.

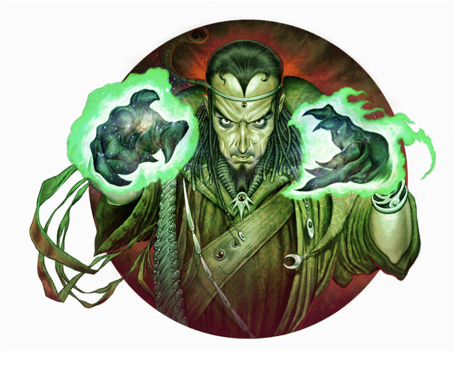
Favourite Villain

Zharradan Marr
The Riddling Reaver
Franklins
5= **Sharella**
4 **Reiner Heydrich**
3 **Zanbar Bone**
2 **Balthus Dire**
1 **Zagor**

Bubbling under: **Tyutchev & Cassandra** (*Talisman of Death*), **Ikiru** (*Sword of the Samurai*), **Globus** (*Spectral Stalkers*), **Kilmarney & Hogg** (*Moonrunner*), and **The Mask** (*Spellbreaker*).

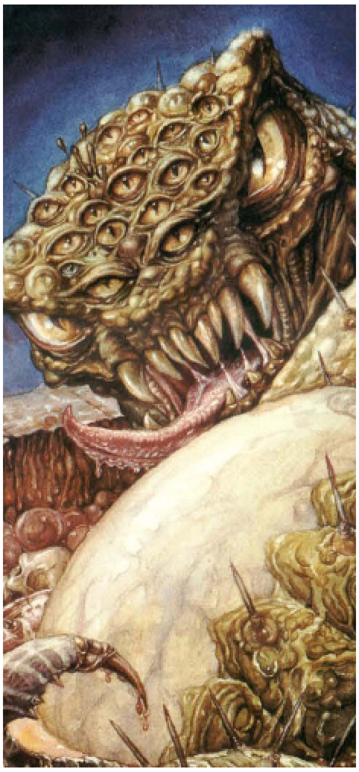
It doesn't come as a huge surprise to see Zagor taking top spot in the favourite villain stakes, nor to see Dire or Bone close to the top spot either. These three are probably the series most recognizable villains, with Zagor in the end only just pipping Dire to the post of top villain.

It is the rest of the list that makes for interesting reading, with the only other returning villain, Reiner Heydrich, securing himself fourth place through his two outings. Fifth is shared by an interesting group; the third and final member of the "Demonic Three" (made up of Zagor, Dire, and Marr), a butler with a secret, a vampire witch, and the background manipulator the Riddling Reaver. Heydrich is the only post-1986 character to reach this part of the poll, although a few others of his contemporaries are to be spotted in the "bubbling under" section.



Favourite Creature

6	**The Ganjees**
	Wheelie
4=	**Vampire**
3	**Jib-Jib**
2	**Mandrake**
1	**Bloodbeast**



Bubbling under: **Goblin** and **Ghoul** (both *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* & others), **Slime Eater** (*Kharé - Cityport of Traps*), **The Cleaners** (*Space Assassin*), **Sea Dragon** (*Demons of the Deep*), **Chameleonite** (*Crypt of the Sorcerer*), **Kreehul** (*Black Vein Prophecy*), and **Iron Eater** (*Stormslayer*).

Perennial favourite *Deathtrap Dungeon* brings us the favourite creature from the pages of the *Fighting Fantasy* series. The Bloodbeast obviously holds a strong hold on the affections of fandom, no doubt helped by the cover of the original edition by Iain McCaig in which the creature is front and centre the focus of the piece.

The Bloodbeast narrowly edges out Stephen Hand's *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers*-like Mandrakes, who manage to "snatch" second place from Steve Jackson's Jib-Jib, the armless furball introduced in the *Sorcery!* series. It is obviously enough of a weirdly entertaining oddity to warrant fan approval, either than or fans like the more practical use of them by Graeme Davis in *Midnight Rogue*. But for whatever reason they like the creature, they are in close agreement with Steve Jackson who nominated the Jib-Jib as his favourite *Fighting Fantasy* creature in the 25th Anniversary Edition of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*.

Favourite Artist

	Les Edwards
6=	**John Blanche**
5	**Alan Langford**
4	**Ian Miller**
3	**Iain McCaig**
2	**Russ Nicholson**
1	**Martin McKenna**

Bubbling under: **David Gallagher**, **Terry Oakes**, **John Sibbick**, **Peter Andrew Jones**, and **Brian Williams**.

Martin McKenna and Russ Nicholson were the runaway winners of this section and, along with third placing Iain McCaig, had a significant lead on the rest of the artists listed here. Which is not so surprising given that the art of these three have already taken up the first seven spots on the "Favourite Cover" poll and a couple of the favourite interior illustrations too.

McKenna has the longest association with the series of any artist having come on board in 1988 (*Dagger of Darkness*) and then recently illustrating *Night of the Necromancer* (2010), his distinctive art now perhaps perceived as a vital part of the overall *Fighting Fantasy* experience. While placing second, Nicholson has a similarly lengthy association with the series, working on the range between 1982 and 1995. His art too can be seen as an important feature of the books, the two artists between them accounting for the interior art of over a quarter of the series.

Favourite Author

	Paul Mason
7=	**Peter Darvill-Evans**
6	**Steve Jackson (US)**
5	**Keith Martin**
4	**Stephen Hand**
3	**Jonathan Green**
2	**Ian Livingstone**
1	**Steve Jackson**

Bubbling under: **Jamie Thomson**, **Robin Waterfield**, and **Marc Gascoigne**.

With a total of half the top ten books in the gamebook poll, it naturally follows that Steve Jackson should top the favourite author poll. He does so, only just beating series cocreator Ian Livingstone for the gong. Jonathan Green scrapes past Stephen Hand for third by the slimmest of margins, less than a point between them.

What is interesting about the favourite author poll is how it compares to the scores given to the books for the first three stats (in other words ignoring the scores given for the artwork). These book votes result in Stephen Hand topping the poll with an average score of 79.0%. Peter Darvill-Evans places second with 77.1%, Jim Bambra is third on 77.0%, Steve Williams fourth with 76.5%, Graeme Davis fifth on 75.3% and then Steve Jackson comes sixth on 73.9%. Mark Smith snaffles seventh on 73.3%, Jamie Thomson takes eighth at 73.1%, Jonathan Green would come ninth with 72.8%, and Paul Mason tenth on 72.9%. In the end Ian Livingstone would place fifteenth with 60.8%.

And on to the wish list...

Art: © Iain McCaig, Martin McKenna, 2011.

Most Wanted Reprint

	Knights of Doom
	Spectral Stalkers
8=	**Midnight Rogue**
	Black Vein Prophecy
6=	**Dead of Night**
	Magehunter
4=	**Beneath Nightmare Castle**
3	**Moonrunner**
	Legend of the Shadow Warriors
1=	**Vault of the Vampire**

Steve JACKSON AND
Ian LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
VAULT OF THE VAMPIRE
FF FIGHTING FANTASY

Bubbling under: **Battleblade Warrior** and **Revenge of the Vampire**.

We asked which old *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook you would most like to see reprinted. Quite reasonably of you, the first three books than fans wish Wizard Books would reprint are the three titles from the top ten (see the previous issue) that are currently unreprinted as part of the current series.

Steve JACKSON AND
Ian LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
LEGEND OF THE SHADOW WARRIORS
FF FIGHTING FANTASY

The appearances of *Knights of Doom* (31st equal) and *Magehunter* (43rd) in this poll (and *Revenge of the Vampire* in "bubbling under") can probably be explained by the fact that they are fairly hard to get a hold of for a reasonable price in their Puffin Books editions. While garnering some votes for a similar predicament, the lowly placing *Deathmoor* (60th), doesn't do well enough to chart here. Beyond these two aberrations, the rest of the requested books all hail from the top twenty.

Most Wanted Author

8	**Robin Waterfield**
7	**Marc Gascoigne**
	Dave Morris
5=	**Peter Darvill-Evans**
4	**Keith Martin**
3	**Steve Jackson**
2	**Paul Mason**
1	**Stephen Hand**

Bubbling under: **Steve Jackson (US)**, **Jamie Thomson**, and **Andrew Chapman**.

We also asked which established *Fighting Fantasy* author you would most like to see pen a new gamebook for the series. Stephen Hand was the stand out writer here with the majority of you wanting him back, presumably so that he can write that third and final volume in his Mandrakes trilogy *Blood of the Mandrake*. He's followed by Paul Mason, another one of the writers accused of bringing maturity and depth to the gamebook series, with Steve Jackson, master of genres, nipping at his heels in third place. It is interesting to note one-book writers Marc Gascoigne and Dave Morris do well in this poll, here probably because of Gascoigne's work on developing the world of Titan and Morris' considerable experience of writing gamebooks for other series.

Suggested Writer

Terry Brooks (*The Sword of Shannara*), **Joe Dever** (*Lone Wolf*), **Morris Simon** (*Prisoners of Pax Tharkas*), **Michael Moorcock** (*Stormbringer*), **Terry Goodkind** (*Wizard's First Rule*), **R.A. Salvatore** (*The Crystal Shard*), **Terry Pratchett** (*The Colour of Magic*), **Steve Moffat** (current head writer of *Doctor Who*), **China Miéville** (*King Rat*), **J.H. Brennan** (*GrailQuest*), **Roger E. Moore** (former editor of the *Dungeons & Dragons* magazine *Dragon*), and **Richard A. Knaak** (*The Legend of Huma*)

In more a fun "if only" section, you were asked to suggest potential new authors for the series. What you have suggested is mainly a large group of fantasy writers, two or three of whom have previous experience at writing gamebooks.

Next Location

4	**Space/Other**	**9.1%**
3	**Old World**	**13.6%**
2	**Khul**	**31.8%**
1	**Allansia**	**45.5%**

And where to set the next new book? The majority of you it seems would like the range to return to its roots and spend a bit more time mucking about in Allansia – home of Firetop Mountain and Fang. That said however, most of you want to explore *new* places in Allansia with locations such as Frostholm, Fangthane, and Arantis being suggested. The classic Allansian standbys of Port Blacksand et cetera didn't merit a single vote!

The Dark Continent came second, fans wanting adventures in places such as Shakuru – the City of Beggars, Yaziel, or Hyennish. The only previously visited spot to get a mention was Hachiman from *Sword of the Samurai*. Even less of you want another outing to the Old World, although it you are forced to go you want to return to Gallantaria.

Genres

6	War	23.5%
5	Superhero	41.2%
	Episonage	
3=	Crime	47.1%
2	Science Fiction	64.7%
1	Horror	76.5%

We also asked, outside of fantasy, what genres you would like to see a new gamebook in the range use. With genres you were able to say "yes" or "no" to each of the six offered categories, rather than being asked to pick your single favourite. Given the success of *House of Hell* it is unsurprising to see "horror" doing well in the poll. Perhaps what is surprising is that, given how poorly the "science fiction" titles have done in the poll, that a large number of you are still willing to entertain the idea of further titles in the genre. A belief that perhaps good stories can be told in that genre, just that the writers haven't quite worked how to yet? Beyond these two, the majority of you were saying "no" to the other genres on offer, although with "crime" and "espionage" that is by only a slim majority.

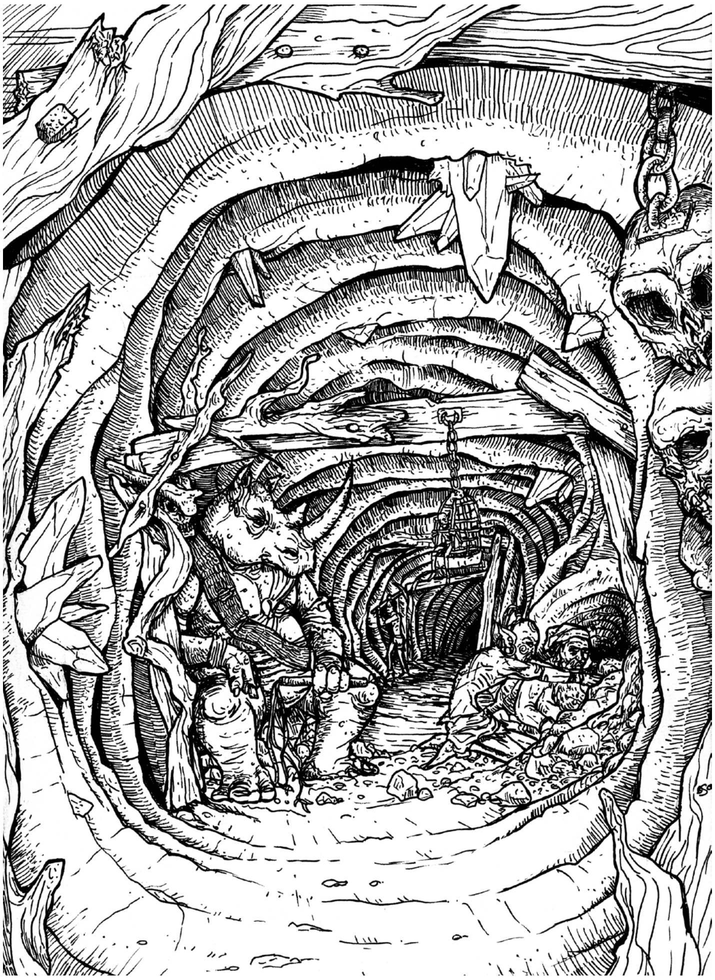
And now, before we look at your thoughts on this very magazine, a few notes about YOU...

Yes, who are you? The average "you" is a male, from an English-speaking country, between the ages of twenty-one and forty, and became a fan of the gamebooks in the Eighties. That's not to say that every one of our readers matches that picture. For example, some of you are younger than twenty, some are from countries like France and Sweden, and some of you only became fans in the last couple of years. We appear to have a fairly international audience for the magazine and long may it continue!

Moving on to the second-to-last section: the magazine itself. So, what did our readers like about the magazine (we were probably a bit too new and sensitive to ask what you *didn't* like!)? You had only the first three issues to vote on at the time...

Favourite Fan Art

	Tarator (2:33)	
	Gremoll (2:1)	
8=	The Frantic Rat (1:18)	4.5%
	The Archmage (3:84)	
6=	Skurasha (2:39)	6.1%
5	Omoz attacking (3:1)	7.6%
4	Corpse Brambler (2:66)	10.6%
3	Dancing girl (3:74)	12.1%
2	Boat approaching the caves (2:21)	13.6%
1	Rhino-Man in tunnel (2:28)	21.2%



...so what did you tell us about the art we managed to put together? The clear favourite here is Brett Schofield, with his almost Russ Nicholson-like artwork depicting a Rhino-Man at rest in a tunnel (reproduced above). Three other pieces of his art, also from the mini adventure *Shrine of the Salamander*, appear in the top ten, alongside his cover art for issue 3 in fifth place.

The other big winner was Natalie Gingerboom with her front cover for issue 2 and the back cover of issue 3. Both artists were back in issue 5 and we hope for issues in the future. The other top slots were taken by Angela Salamaliki's barely clad dancing girl from the first instalment of Ian Brocklehurt's *Aelous Raven and the Wrath of the Sea-Witch* and Victor Chen's excellent Corpse Brambler from the "Out of the Pit" section.

Favourite Feature

10	Can't Find Gundobad...	2.5%
9	Omens & Auguries	3.8%
	Maps in Focus	
7=	Martin McKenna interview	5.1%
	Bang!	
5=	*Resurrection of the Dead*	6.3%
4	Everything I Need to Know...	8.7%
3	The Fact of Fiction	10.1%
2	*Shrine of the Salamander*	17.7%
1	Jonathan Green interview	29.1%

Our two-part interview with writer Jonathan Green was your favourite item from the first three issues of the magazine. The interview with artist Martin McKenna also features in these poll results, both of which we're happy to take as a sign that you like the interviews. We're working on future interviews with the writers and artists, so, as they say, watch this space!

Two of the then three mini-adventures also placed reasonably well in the poll, *Shrine of the Salamander* a standout success, helped no doubt by the art of Brett Schofield as seen by the results of the favourite fan art poll. The humorous gets a good look in at fourth position, Ed Jolley's distillation of the series to a set of morals to live life by getting the thumbs up from readers. You also appear to like a more serious bent to your material with articles like "Bang!" and "Maps in Focus" charting well. Finally, Guillermo Paredes' tireless efforts to gather gamebook news from around the globe pay off with a respectable 9th place. As you can see from this very issue the wealth of news he manages to discover has led to an additional page of coverage!

We the editorial team can only hope that we serve up a selection of material that continues to be as interesting and entertaining in future issues.

And this leads us to...

Future Material

What do you want to see in future issues of this magazine?

By far the most asked for item is something we're already committed to continuing with, and that was more interviews. We can't often promise the "who and when", as that is usually a matter of some negotiation due to the time and effort needed to put an interview together. That also doesn't take into account those who may not wish to be interviewed or those who simply can not be tracked down to ask. We can at this point state that in the near future we *hope* to print interviews with Graeme Davis, Marc Gascoigne, Ian Miller, Nick Sidwell, and Paul Struth.

The other top request is for reviews of *Fighting Fantasy* merchandise. As you will note with this issue, we finally have a reviews section, so we can tick that box.

You are keen for serious material like "The Fact of Fiction" articles to continue, judging by the number of votes for that series. Meanwhile, for future topics for serious articles to cover, suggestions included looking at *Fighting Fantasy* in other languages (something were are currently working on – if you are one of our foreign language readers and think you might be able to help, drop us a line); analysis of single writer's output to note trends, recycled ideas and other identifying features of their writing; a look at how the various regions on Titan are portrayed in the books; and comparing and contrasting the *Fighting Fantasy* series with the output of other gamebook ranges (something like "*Fighting Fantasy* vs. *Lone Wolf*". On a slight step away from this you would also like to see major character or location profiles that can then be utilised by other fans for *AFF* campaigns or their own amateur adventures, almost mini source books for gamers. Following on from this, some readers would like to see multi-player mini adventures (similar to things like *The Tower of Hades* that was run in *Warlock*). This is something we'd like to see as an, at least, irregular feature of the magazine and we'll be looking into it.

Three other requests included themed issues, quizzes and competitions. Themed issues, while a nice idea, are far too difficult to coordinate. The one exception to not trying themed issues would be a possible celebratory issue next year when the series turn 30. Quizzes/puzzles are an idea that has been put forward before, but we aren't quite there yet in terms of execution. Competitions are a different beast altogether, because, as Editor, I'm loath to run one without some sort of decent prize on offer. We were able to offer a great prize to go along with completing the survey form back in issue #3 and you will see elsewhere in this issue that we're able to run a new competition because another excellent prize is up for grabs. Should the magazine continue to get such opportunities to put up similar prizes then there will be competitions in the future. But we can't promise one every issue!

Finally, the last bunch of suggested ideas for material were all fan related. The first is "fan memories", which we've launched this issue as the irregular "The Magic Quest" column where any fan can write a page explaining how they came to be a fan of *Fighting Fantasy*. Similar to this was request for profiles/interviews with notable fan collectors, articles looking at fan output (such as amateur fan gamebooks), a feature on the Titan Rebuilding/Titannica effort to document Titan and *Fighting Fantasy*, and lastly profiles/interviews with the team that produce this magazine. Apart from the first, we've no current plans to cover these topics. However, if someone comes up with the right angle they may be looked at.

While the core team that help write for and advise on the magazine *could* possibly cover all of the suggestions given here themselves, they're only human and have topics based on their own interests to explore. So, if you are dying to see something in print in the magazine, your best chance *might* just be to write it yourself. Contact the magazine today with your suggestion and plan of attack for writing it!

ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

Most Important Contribution

Steve Jackson, one of the Founders of *Fighting Fantasy*, is its most influential contributor to the series, because his drive saw it through its birth and then helped it grow into the most popular, entertaining and varied gamebook brand in the world. Jackson's pioneering creations were the foundations for other authors to build other outstanding gamebooks upon.

Let's start at the beginning. Steve Jackson, along with Ian Livingstone, were the authors of the first *Fighting Fantasy* book, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*. However, getting the book published was an enormous challenge and if it was not for the determination of Steve and Ian, it may have fell through and *Fighting Fantasy* may not have been. There were issues over the title, issues over the age range to aim at, issues with what to call the abilities and issues with the game system. However, the authors overcame those problems and produced a first draft by writing half of the adventure each.

However, the draft came back and since the two writing styles were different, Steve had to rewrite the whole thing. *Warlock* was then published, with Steve and Ian learning a lot of lessons, one being that if someone has to rewrite the whole book to make the style consistent, then they should write books individually. Steve did so, producing several gamebooks, each one with a unique and innovative twist.

If you look at *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks by a particular author, you will notice similar themes. For example, Livingstone writes dungeon crawls where you have to pick up items. The US Steve Jackson gives you large areas to explore, and Stephen Hand's contain Hammer horror influences. However, no two books written by Steve Jackson are alike. His theme is innovation and it was his innovation that kept the *Fighting Fantasy* series fresh and led to other authors learning from his explorations and building upon them to create even greater gamebooks of their own.

After *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, Jackson did something different with each gamebook he wrote – *The Citadel of Chaos* had magic rules. *Starship Traveller* was a multi character sci-fi gamebook with ship to ship combat. *House of Hell* was a horror story set in modern times. *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* was a superhero book. In *Creature of Havoc*, you play a beast that doesn't understand language, has no idea of where you came from and didn't even have a will of its own. Finally, *Sorcery!* was a four book saga with a different aesthetic to previous *Fighting Fantasy* books, an original spell system and a lot of brilliant encounters.

The diversity that Jackson produced led to better gamebooks. Progress cannot be made without experimentation and although experimentation always leads to a few mistakes, each expedition into the unknown will give more returns in experience and talent. This leads to a greater long term profit than just sticking to what you know. To paraphrase Thomas Edison, you never fail; you just discover a way that doesn't work.

Most of Jackson's contributions were great successes but some weren't. However, Jackson's pioneering approach pushed the boundaries and raised the standard of the gamebook genre with the lessons that these experiments provided.

If it was not for the poorly received *Starship Traveller* (with only *Sky Lord* ranked lower than it in the *Fighting Fantazine* survey) then who knows whether any sci-fi *Fighting Fantasy* books may have been written at all.

Black Vein Prophecy begins in a similar fashion to *Creature of Havoc* with you not knowing anything about who you are. Both of the books were voted very highly in the *Fighting Fantazine* survey.

The best thing about experimentation is that eventually, you find something that works even better than your expectations. The *Sorcery!* series did this marvellously. It broke the mould in several ways – the story covered four books, all of them longer than the normal 400 paragraphs, the books had a more complicated and involved magic system with writing and artwork which was designed to appeal to a more mature gamebook reader. And it is great. It is a pleasure to explore all of the books, each with a different setting and challenge.

Jackson also took *Fighting Fantasy* out of the gamebook genre – he came up with the *Fighting Fantasy* role-playing game, wrote the first *Fighting Fantasy* novel and designed a board game based on *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*.

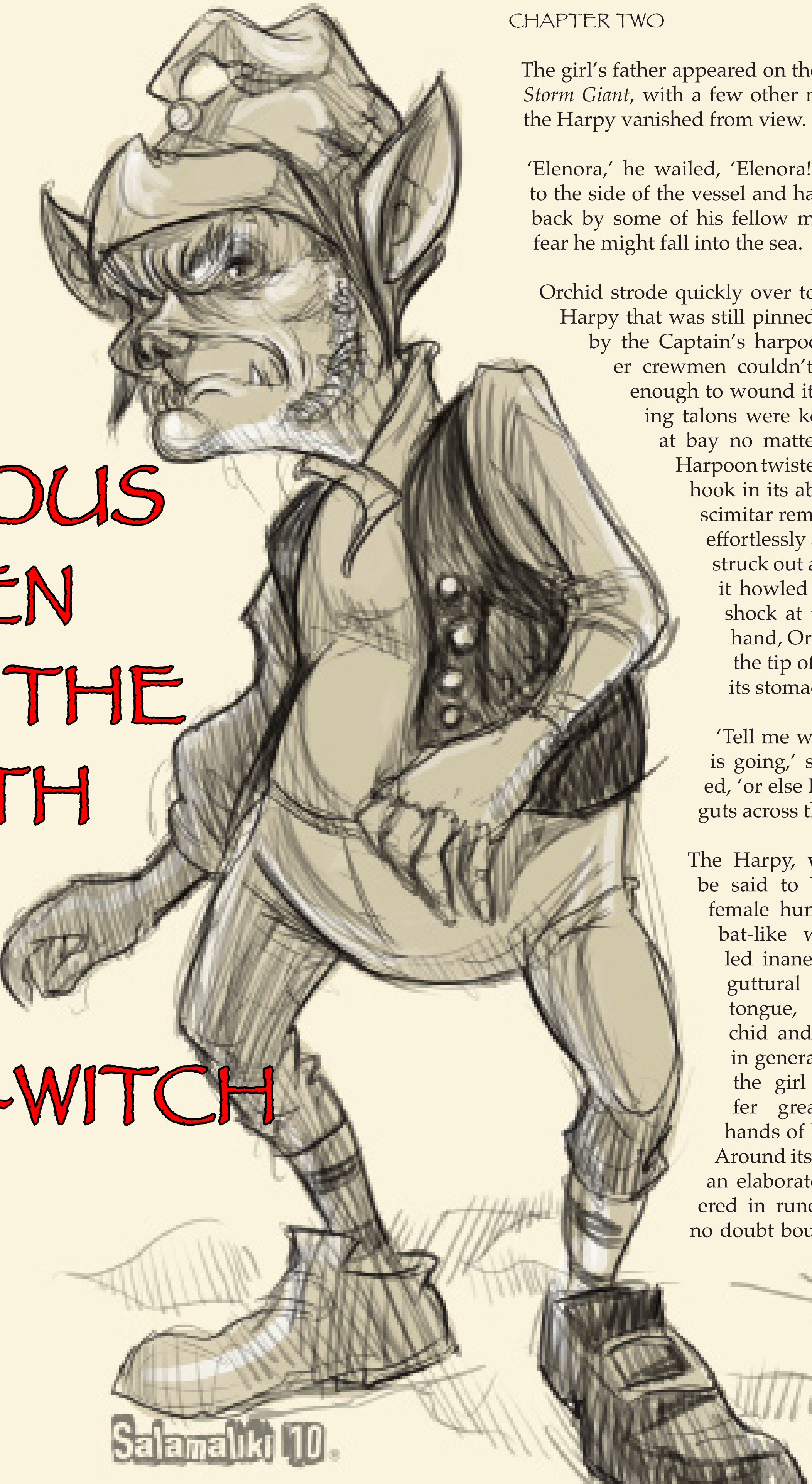
For example, the simplistic dungeon crawls of *Fighting Fantasy – The Introductory Role Playing Game* in 1984 was the seed that led to *The Riddling Reaver* in 1986. This in turn then led into the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* system, which started in 1989, and contained elements from *The Riddling Reaver*, such as damage tables for weapons and splitting the adventure into 'scenes' as if the players were in a movie. It also had spells which drain STAMINA like the spells from one of Jackson's other creations, the *Sorcery!* series.

Steve Jackson's determination and creativity helped produce the *Fighting Fantasy* series and then pushed its boundaries to take it further. Many of his works are huge successes in their own right but they have also inspired other *Fighting Fantasy* authors, established and amateur, to build on Jackson's experiments and take their own gamebooks into new, exciting directions. Without him, *Fighting Fantasy* would have been a lot less diverse and a lot less entertaining than what it is like today.

STUART LLOYD

FF

AELOUS RAVEN AND THE WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH



by Ian Brocklehurst

Illustrated by Angela Salamaliki and Ian Brocklehurst © 2011

CHAPTER TWO

The girl's father appeared on the deck of the *Storm Giant*, with a few other merchants as the Harpy vanished from view.

'Elenora,' he wailed, 'Elenora!' He rushed to the side of the vessel and had to be held back by some of his fellow merchants for fear he might fall into the sea.

Orchid strode quickly over to the captive Harpy that was still pinned to the deck by the Captain's harpoon. The other crewmen couldn't quite close enough to wound it as its slashing talons were keeping them at bay no matter how hard Harpoon twisted the barbed hook in its abdomen. The scimitar removed a talon effortlessly as the Harpy struck out at Orchid. As it howled in pain and shock at the loss of a hand, Orchid pointed the tip of the blade at its stomach.

'Tell me where the girl is going,' she demanded, 'or else I'll spill your guts across the deck.'

The Harpy, which could be said to be a primal female humanoid with bat-like wings, cackled inanely and, in a guttural Alkemisian tongue, cursed Orchid and all humans in general and hoped the girl would suffer greatly at the hands of her mistress. Around its neck it wore an elaborate collar covered in runes that were no doubt bound the creature to servitude through magic and on its forehead it bore a trident design tattoo.

'Who is your mistress?'

The Harpy laughed and spat blood across Orchid's boots. Orchid's immediate reaction was to disembowel the Harpy. It cried out in dismay as its steaming guts spilled out onto the *Storm Giant*'s deck sending a fetid stench into the air.

'Put it overboard,' Orchid said to Harpoon, turning her back to the dying Harpy.

He nodded in reply and, with all his might applied on the fishing spear stuck in its now exposed gut, he started to push the squealing creature across the deck. The movement forced its entrails to unravel in a bloody means, which almost made Harpoon slip over. However, the able sea Captain kept his footing and drove the Harpy off his ship and into the sea; fishing spear, entrails and all.

'Good riddance,' he yelled after spitting a ball of phlegm at the hapless creature, which instantly loss conscious as it splashed into the salty sea water and sank from sight.

The young girl's father was on his knees, being consoled by some of the other merchants, as Orchid stuck her scimitar into the *Storm Giant*'s deck. She pointed at Harpoon and her finger ran from him to the other crewmen.

'Who was the "mistress" that that thing mentioned? You're seamen from these parts so you must know something?'

Harpoon spat on the deck. 'It'll be the Sea Witch. That tattoo on its forehead was her mark.'

'Sea Witch?' asked Raven, joined at his side by Hacksaw who handed him the short sword he had thrown into the ship's mast.

'Aye,' nodded Harpoon. 'I came across a deserted schooner once that had that trident symbol burned across the blood-stained deck.'

'Course,' said another crewman. 'No one knows if she is a Witch, that's just what we call her.'

'Does this witch have a name?' asked Orchid.

'Delfina Cove,' replied a mature sailor, 'the Sea Witch of the Glimmering Sea.'

'She's been around since before the War of the Wizards,' continued the crewman whose arm had been injured by a Harpy. 'So they say.'

'Sorcery's involved, then,' said Raven, more to himself than anyone else. 'Not a good sign.'

Orchid pointed to the horizon where the Harpy had disappeared. 'What's that way?'

'Her island I suspect,' said Harpoon. 'My Father told me of an island often shrouded in mist that lays thataways. No one would...'

'Set a course that way, Captain.' Orchid pulled her scimitar free from the deck. 'We have a passenger to rescue.'

'Hold on, Amazon,' retorted Harpoon with both hands raised palms-up. 'I'm not a callous man, but we're sailors not warriors who can just sail over to the island of the Sea Witch and rescue the unfortunate child.'

Orchid turned to face him and extended her arm to point the scimitar at him. 'As you guessed, Captain I was born an Amazon. Yet when I was eleven years old raiders attacked my village and I was taken to be the bride of some chieftain, whose name I forget. No one was left alive in my village to mount a rescue. So on my wedding night I bit off a memento of the event and disappeared into the night.' Orchid paused and grinned, bearing her gleaming white teeth. 'This girl has a chance at being rescued. I intend to save her.' She swung the sword towards the grief stricken father. 'You'll offer a suitable reward if I bring her back to you alive, won't you?' The man nodded. 'I have a little gold on me now, but in Alkemis I can give whatever you want?'

'Five hundred gold for me, Hacksaw and...' she turned to look at Raven, lowering the scimitar to her side. 'Will you join us, Birdy? I suspect this rescue could do with your kind of experience?'

Raven sighed. 'I'm not too keen on going against witches, warlocks and their ilk. Magic is difficult to outwit.'

Orchid nodded. 'Hacksaw has something for us on occasions such as this.'

Raven looked to the Black Elf, who drew from out of his cloak a gold dragon talisman on a chain thread. Hacksaw handed it to him, saying as he did so, 'An ancient Elven charm that will protect the wearer against all but the most powerful magic spells.'

Raven slipped the amulet over his head and tucked it into his shirt. 'Count me in, then,' he said looking towards Orchid.

The Amazon flashed him a smile and turned towards the girl's father. 'And five hundred gold pieces for Birdy Raven as well, okay?'

The merchant nodded. He shook of his mercantile associates and walked over to Orchid to shake her hand. 'Fifteen hundred gold pieces it is for the safe return of my daughter to me.'

'What gold have you on you now?' asked Orchid

'One hundred and fifty pieces, I think?'

Orchid nodded and looked towards Harpoon. 'Captain, is that a worthy fee to sail us to the island that your father spoke of?'

Harpoon looked momentarily from Orchid to his crew who seemed happy with the sound of the gold that would be distributed among them. 'Aye,' he answered. 'That sounds a reasonable fee to delay our voyage to Alkemis for a while.' He barked a few orders and immediately the crew leapt to life to get the *Storm Giant* on a course heading that followed the direction of the Harpy.

Hacksaw grabbed the sailor whose arm had been injured before he could get to work on the ship's rigging and applied a little cream to the injury. An Elven remedy that would ensure the wound would heal rapidly. Although the initial application forced tears out of the sailor's eyes, moments later he watched in amazement as the nasty wound began to fade before his eyes.

***

Raven stood at the prow of the *Storm Giant,* idly rubbing his Elven talisman absentmindedly as the ship ploughed through the waves in hot pursuit of the Harpy and the abducted child.

Orchid approached him and stood by his left side. 'Do you think rescuing this child is a fool's errand?'

Raven let go of the talisman and turned to face the Amazon. 'I don't think it'll be easy. I'm guessing this Sea Witch's island will be swarming in minions. Maybe Orcs or Goblins, but if she dabbles in the dark arts then it could be an island of the undead.'

'So why have you decided to come along?'

Raven smiled. 'Fortune and glory, my dear. Fortune and glory.'

Orchid's right eyebrow rose inquisitively.

'This Sea Witch will live in a fortress or a citadel or maybe a dungeon complex build into the island itself. Either way, I'm sure it'll be full of unimaginable valuables, and if the sailor's stories are true and she's been around since before the War of the Wizards then...'

'There could be treasure beyond value.'

Raven nodded. 'If we save the girl we'll get the glory, but I'm hoping to find a fortune to retire on.'

Orchid's head flicked backwards as she laughed aloud. 'People like us never retire, Birdy.'

'I'm not as young as I once was,' answered Raven, defensively. 'My reflexes aren't what they once were and it takes longer to recover from injuries, and given what I usually do I get injured a lot.'

'Do you really see yourself giving up a life of adventure and settling down as a farmer or innkeeper?'

Raven shrugged his shoulders. 'Not really, but I don't want to end up dead in the gutter or in the bellies of a family of Troglodytes either.'

'So our rescue attempt is to be Birdy Raven's swansong?'

'Maybe, it depends if I find the fortune I'm hoping lies on that island.' Raven caught Orchid's attention with his right index finger, which was extended dead ahead. The Amazon followed its lead and looked ahead. In the distance was the vague outline of an island that had a dense covering of clouds above it and a layer of mist obscured the shoreline.

'Land ho,' cried a crewman from the crow's nest.

Harpoon hurried across the deck to Raven and Orchid. They turned to face the *Storm Giant*'s captain who looked decidedly nervous.

'What troubles you, Captain?' asked Orchid.

'I'm not sure if I dare sail much closer,' Harpoon looked over the side of the ship and into the sea. 'They say the Sea Witch can call on things from the deep. Ancient leviathans of the abyss that have been swimming in the seas since before the dawn of time itself, which could sink us in the same manner that we'd step on an ant.'

'So, how are we going to reach the island?' enquired Raven.

Harpoon pointed to the main deck where four crew men were bringing up a small rowing boat from out of the hold. 'You'll be able to use some of these boats we were taking to sell in Alkemis.'

'Some?' Orchid said, puzzled. 'The three of us will fit in that boat quite easily.'

'Aye,' replied Harpoon, 'but some of my men have decided to join in the rescue.' He sighed. 'The girl's father is a very wealthy man and the lure of five hundred gold pieces is enough to persuade them to risk their lives with you... professionals.'

'How many?' asked Raven.

'Three men.'

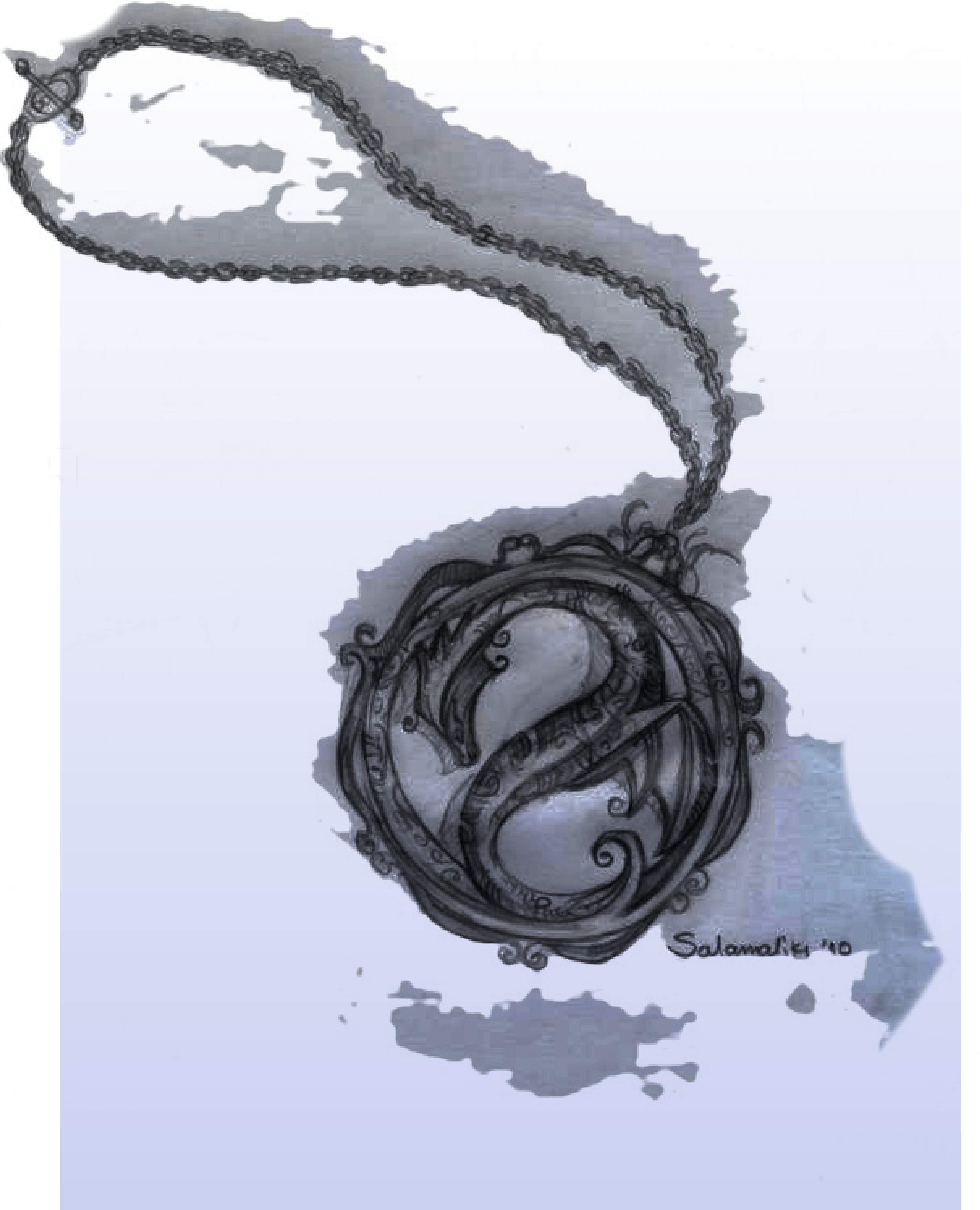
'Three thousand gold pieces,' whistled Orchid. 'He is indeed a wealthy merchant. His word is true?'

Harpoon nodded. 'Jared Akbar is one of the richest men I know. He dots after his daughter, especially since her mother died about four years ago from a plague that claimed many lives, rich or poor.'

With the first boat placed on deck the four crewmen returned to the hold to bring up another rowing boat. Within twenty minutes both boats had been lowered into the sea and held in place with rope. Raven surveyed the three men who had chosen to join the expedition to the island. He asked their names and if they had any fighting experience.

'Noakes,' said the first man. 'Been a sailor all my days, so no fighting experience to speak of. Good with ropes though, which might be useful on this island if we have to climb things.'

'Avid,' said the second man who was younger and taller. 'I was in the militia once, for years ago. Had a few run ins with



Salamaliki '10

Goblins and a drunken Troll.'

'So, what made you take to the sea?' enquired Raven.

'Better pay.'

Raven nodded in agreement and turned to the third man who had been the injured one healed by Hacksaw.

'Conar,' he said quietly. 'When I was younger my family was attacked by bandits. I helped my Father fight them off. Apart from that I've been on ships most of my working days.'

'Well,' said Raven looking along the line of three men. 'It's probably best to arm yourselves with fish spears and gutting knives and take a flask of water each along with something simple to eat.'

The men dispersed to quickly collect their provisions and weapons. Orchid and Hacksaw silently appeared at Raven's side. Although surprised by their appearance, he masked his shock with years of experience at encountering things that would make most men white haired through fear.

'These men are motivated by greed, which makes them unreliable.' Orchid made a candid observation.

'Aren't we all motivated by greed?' countered Raven. 'This merchant is willing to give five hundred gold pieces a rescuer. Can't blame them for trying?' He half pulled out the talisman from within his shirt and flashed it at the Black Elf. 'Do you have anything like this for the men?

Hacksaw shook his head.

The trio of sailors returned to their new companions.

Hacksaw withdrew his left hand from a pocket and opened the clenched hand. There were three gold rings. He raised the hand towards the gathered sailors. 'Take a ring, my friends. They are rings of good fortune. They will protect you when you least expect it, but if they save your life then their power is forfeited and they turn to rust.'

'Gold cannot rust,' said Avid.

Hacksaw smiled. '"All that glitters is not gold" – a Black Elf proverb to remember methinks.'

The three sailors took a ring each and found a finger on their right hand that it fitted.

'Time to leave, gentlemen,' announced Orchid and she swung her body over the side and lowered her-self into one of the small boats.

Hacksaw pointed at Avid. 'Follow me, my friend.'

The two of them went after Orchid.

Raven turned to Noakes and Conar. 'You guys get in and I'll follow you in a moment.'

The two seamen nodded and clambered overboard and into the second boat.

Raven motioned at Harpoon to come over to him. 'Captain,' he said quietly. 'I think you're a man of your word and you will wait for us, but I fear the wrath of this Sea Witch. If she hasn't already seen us approach in a scrying pool then when we make landfall I wonder if an attack will happen?'

'Sorcery is beyond my ken, adventurer,' replied Harpoon. 'But what you say is a possibility. What do you suggest we do?'

Raven looked towards the island and then towards the open sea. 'Keep any eye on us, Captain. Once we've reached the island and disappeared from the shoreline make haste to Alkemis.'

'Why?'

'First of all this expedition could take some time. You could be anchored here for some time leaving you open to attack. Secondly, with your best fighters gone... how will you protect yourselves?'

'That's true, but how will you escape the island?'

Raven shrugged his shoulders and grimaced. 'I'm hoping that the Sea Witch has some ships at her disposal we could make use of.'

Harpoon nodded. 'Aye, she may have some Corsairs. There are stories of raids by pirates in league with her who ravish coastal villages and make off with young girls.'

Raven rubbed his chin thoughtfully. 'This Sea Witch has a thing for young girls it seems, interesting.' He shook Harpoon's hand firmly and made for the side of the ship. 'I hope to see you in Alkemis in the not too distant future.'

Harpoon bid him farewell with a wave of his hand.

***

Within a short time the two rowing boats had beached on the pebbled shore of the island. The beach was very narrow – no more than thirty meters from the water's edge to an imposing rock edifice that circled the island. As the band of adventures carried the boats up the beach to the edge of the cliff, Orchid looked along the cliff.

'Doesn't look like we can climb it, I mean look how unnaturally smooth the surface is.'

'Sorcery,' Raven sighed, wearily.

'I agree,' added Hacksaw. 'This cliff is like a wall to keep out strangers and prying eyes.

'So, how are we going to get in?' asked Noakes as they settled the boats against the foot of the cliff.

'There must be an entrance,' said Conar. 'Otherwise this rescue mission is going to be over before it's even begun.'

'We'll scout the perimeter of this cliff and see what we come across,' announced Orchid. She pointed at Avid. 'Which way, sailor?'

Avid looked to his right and left. Both directions looked identical. He pointed with his left hand – left. 'That way looks good to me.'

Orchid nodded. 'Okay, gentlemen, let's go.'

The six-strong group immediately set off along the pebbled beach at a quick pace. It was after about forty minutes of walking that they came across the small cove. The foreboding cliff face curved round the water inlet at this point and cut into the rock were a series of steps leading up to a rock hewn gateway above which was the trident symbol of the Sea Witch.

'I take it this is a back door?' Suggested Noakes, with a wide grin across his face.

'Certainly unguarded it would seem,' answered Orchid.

'Probably because no one ever comes to the island,' put forward Avid as a reason for the lack of guard.

The group had to wade out into ankle deep sea water to make it to the first step before they began their ascent. Raven led the way, slowly. As they edged up the steps he was looking for signs of concealed traps, but there was nothing. Even the gateway entrance was safe.

The group passed through the gateway and found themselves on the edge off a small plateau above a jungle.

'By the beard of Titan,' spluttered Noakes. 'I don't believe it.'

The jungle below spread out in all directions almost as far as the eye could see. In the distance there seemed to be a mountain range and with a faint whisper of smoke trailing into the sky, possibly a volcano.

'This is no island,' gasped Conar. 'It's... its'

'Powerful magic,' said Hacksaw, 'ancient magic from a time long, long before the War of the Wizards. Probably from an age before the accursed Dark Elf rebellion that tainted my people forever. The island has been enchanted with a spell that widens enclosed spaces.'

'Hence the high cliff,' surmised Orchid, 'around the island.'

'So, the island's bigger on the inside than the outside.' Raven shook his head in disbelief. 'If this Sea Witch can wield this much magical power then...'

'This is not within her powers,' cut in Hacksaw. 'She may be mistress of this island, but she did not create it. For if she could then she'd not need Harpies to kidnap the child, but simply use her vast power to seize the girl from the deck of the ship without breaking sweat.'

Raven nodded, accepting the logic behind that argument.

'One thing's for sure,' murmured Avid, 'this rescue is going to take days and not hours.'

No one answered for they all knew he was right.

TO BE CONTINUED

FF

Out of the pit

Please, please, please submit your own creatures for inclusion in “Out of the Pit!” Make sure they conform to the format presented here and send them to me, **Andrew Wright**, the “Out of the Pit” Editor, at **greyarea13@hotmail.com** – I look forward to reading your fearsome and fiendish contributions!

RETURN TO THE CROAKING CAVES OF KAKHABAD!

In this installment of “Out of the Pit” we return to Daddu-Yadu in distant Kakhabad, where we first searched for the legendary *Shrine of the Salamander* back in issue 2 of *Fighting Fantazine*. One of the maxims I used when writing that adventure (and some of my others), was to take monsters from Titan canon that are poorly known and develop them further. This is a trait I’m happy to see I share with official *Fighting Fantasy* author Jonathan Green, who noted in his blog that when working on a proposal for “*FF* adventures I will also point out monsters that I’m using from *Out of the Pit* that haven’t seen print in any of the official books yet” (Green, 27/3/2010). Anyway, for “Out of the Pit” I’ve chosen to take four beasts from *Shrine of the Salamander* and explain them more fully here, so you can use them when writing your own solo *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook adventures or designing *AFF* multiplayer scenarios to inflict upon your friends.

We give you **Out of the Pit** – a mini-bestiary of monsters drawn from across the world of Titan and beyond. Each illustrated creature entry is broken down into two sections: one concerns game statistics, and the other is a longer description of the creature and its special features. The statistics* listed for each creature are: SKILL, STAMINA, Attacks, Weapon Used, Habitat, Number Encountered, Type, Reaction and Intelligence.

HORNTOAD

by Steve Jackson (UK) and Andrew Wright

SKILL: 9
STAMINA: 9
ATTACKS: 1
WEAPONS USED: Large Bite/Claw or as per Weapon (usually a Club, Spear, or Halberd (as per Pole Arm))
HABITAT: Caves, Rivers, Marshes
NUMBER ENCOUNTERED: 2-7
TYPE: Amphibian/Humanoid
REACTION: Hostile
INTELLIGENCE: Low

> “...at dawn the next day you set off north-eastwards towards the Greenbeck River. The young Princes are held beneath a ruined temple on its banks by the Moon-Worshippers of Phlanx. At night their captives are tormented; during the day they are guarded by Giant Horntoads...” (*The Tasks of Tantalon*, p. 18)

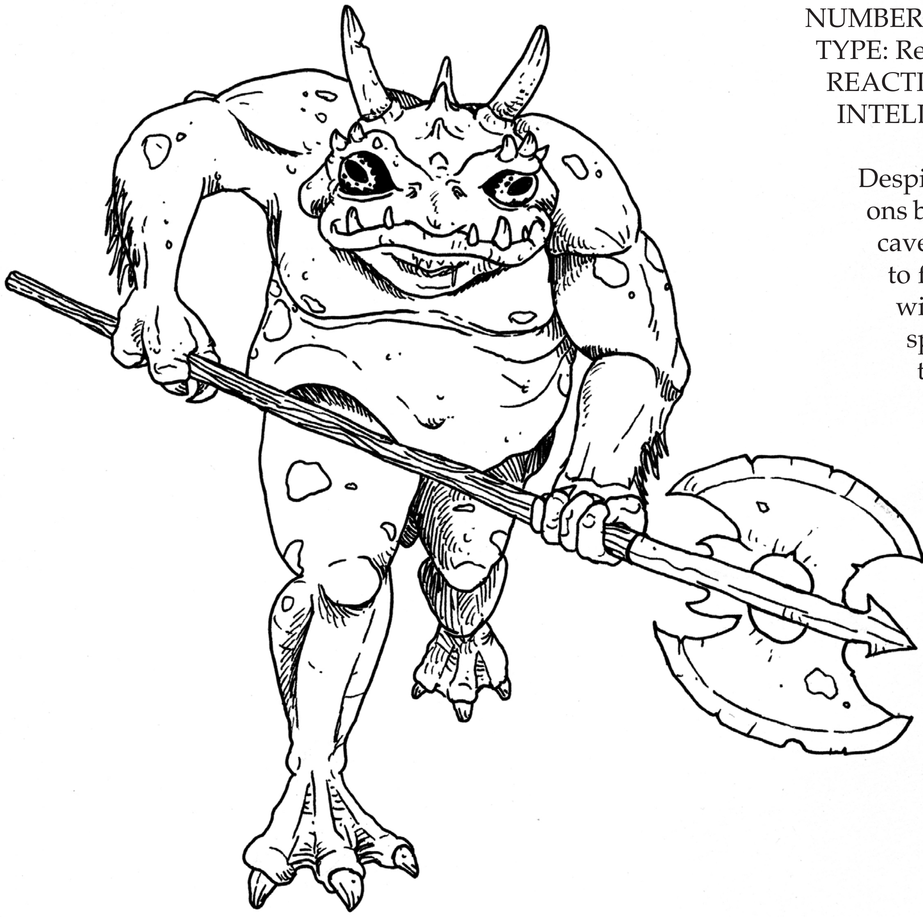
HORNTOADS (also known as GIANT HORNTOADS by some authors due to their size), are fat, toad-like creatures up to and occasionally over two metres tall. They have great clawed hands and feet, a tooth-filled maw, and two curving horns rising from the back of their skulls that give the creatures their name. Horntoads are warty and hideous to look at, with a fin-like crest running down the length of their back, and their name is a byword for cruelty and loathsomeness across the Old World.

Horntoads generally eat whatever they can get their slimy paws on, especially insects of any kind (giant or otherwise), and their favourite food is the humble bee. Gallantarian legend states that the hero who solved the Tasks of Tantalon outwitted the Horntoads guarding the Princes of Ham (who had been transformed in frogs!) by releasing a swarm of bees to distract their captors.

Although usually encountered as raiding parties of 2-7 warriors, Horntoads often band together in a central lair – typically a partially flooded underground cavern or a stinking fly-blown tract of marsh – where they are ruled over by the largest individual (SKILL 10, STAMINA 10). Here they gather dur-

---

*An explanation of all these statistics (except “Weapon Used”) can be found in the original *Out of the Pit* (p.15/11-13. See also *Warlock* #7 p.10-11). An explanation of the “Weapon Used” category can be found in *Dungeoneer* (p.153-156 and 164-165).



ing the full moon, to pay respects to Furlakk the Frog God, and to spawn. Interestingly, Horntoads go through a similar life cycle to that of their distant amphibian ancestors, though their tadpoles are both large, numerous, and highly carnivorous (KILLER TADPOLE: SKILL 3, STAMINA 3, Small Bite)! Occasionally, small groups of Horntoads are lured away from their colonies to become mercenaries, often taking up posts as halberd-wielding guards in some damp corner of an evil lord's dungeon.

In his epic yet unpublished work entitled *Collected Lore of the Swamp Beasts*, the shadowy figure known only as the Grey Mage proposes that Horntoads are related to similar creatures from Allansia, such as the Toadmen of the Bu Fon Fens. Other possible relatives are the warty Kreehuls from the Zushan Jungles of Sunara, which forms part of the archipelago known as the Isles of the Dawn. Whatever the case may be, few sane and rational beings would willingly claim kinship with the bloated horrors known as Horntoads...

[Originally appeared in *The Tasks of Tantalon*, pp. 18-19; and *The Seven Serpents* (288, 299)]

Art: © Brett Schofield; Andrew Wright, 2011. Used with permission.

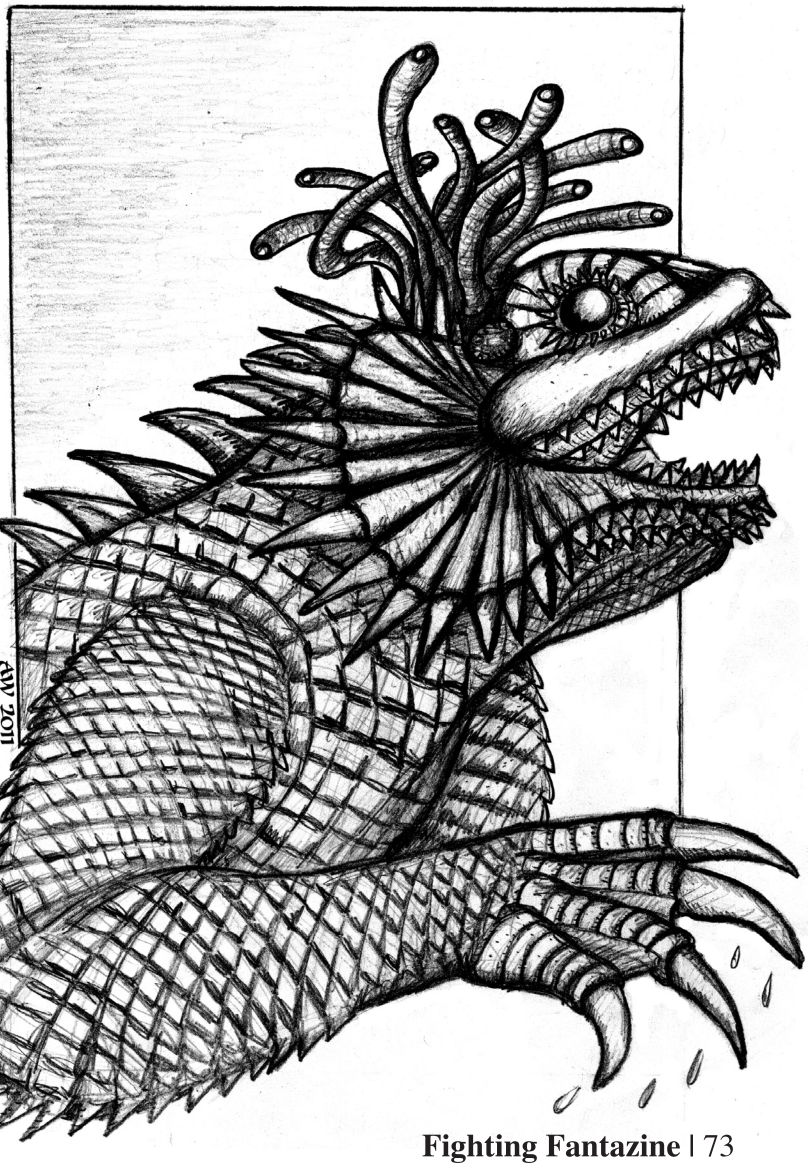
MUD DRAGON

by Jonathan Ford and Andrew Wright

SKILL: 10
STAMINA: 6
ATTACKS: 1
WEAPONS USED: Large Bite
HABITAT: Caves, Marshes
NUMBER ENCOUNTERED: 1-2
TYPE: Reptile
REACTION: Unfriendly
INTELLIGENCE: Low

Despite their name, MUD DRAGONS are not true dragons but instead a type of Giant Lizard, found in flooded caves and muddy swamps across Titan. They grow up to four metres long, and are covered in brown scales, with a spiny frill around their neck and a crest of spikes running down their back to the end of their tail. Mud Dragons are flesh-eaters, devouring anything they can catch with their wide mouth, which is studded with row upon row of sharp, triangular teeth. Most bizarrely, a writhing clump of glowing green tentacles sprouts from the monster's brow and wave about in the air like antennae. These tentacles may indeed have some purpose in detecting prey, and also providing the Mud Dragon with a light source as it slithers about the mire-filled tunnels of its lair, hunting for food. When disturbed, these creatures begin sucking air into their body, inflating themselves to double in size within a matter of seconds, and this is reflected by their relatively high SKILL score.

Landor Shanzul, a scholar from Alkemis, has speculated that Mud Dragons are Giant Lizards afflicted by the warping mutations of Chaos,



hence the tentacles and the profusion of spikes and spines. He goes on to note that the likely closest relative of these beasts is an obscure lizard-like creature found in the rocky wastes of the Ironcap Mountains, on the Isle of Despair. What little is known of this animal comes from the journals of Captain Garaeth of the Petrel, a vessel from Pollua that landed on this distant shores. Garaeth states that its appearance is similar to the Mud Dragon, except that it is intelligent, and capable of both speech and casting magic spells! Clearly, whatever Chaos forces have afflicted the Mud Dragon has likely altered this creature also…

[Originally appeared in *Warlock* Issue 5, *Dungeon of Justice*: Cover, p. 19, p. 22 (9), p. 33 (74, 82), p. 35 (101), p. 47 (182, 188), p. 48 (193)]

SALAMANDER

by Steve Jackson (UK), Jonathan Green, Andrew Chapman, A. E. Arkle, Robin Waterfield, and Andrew Wright

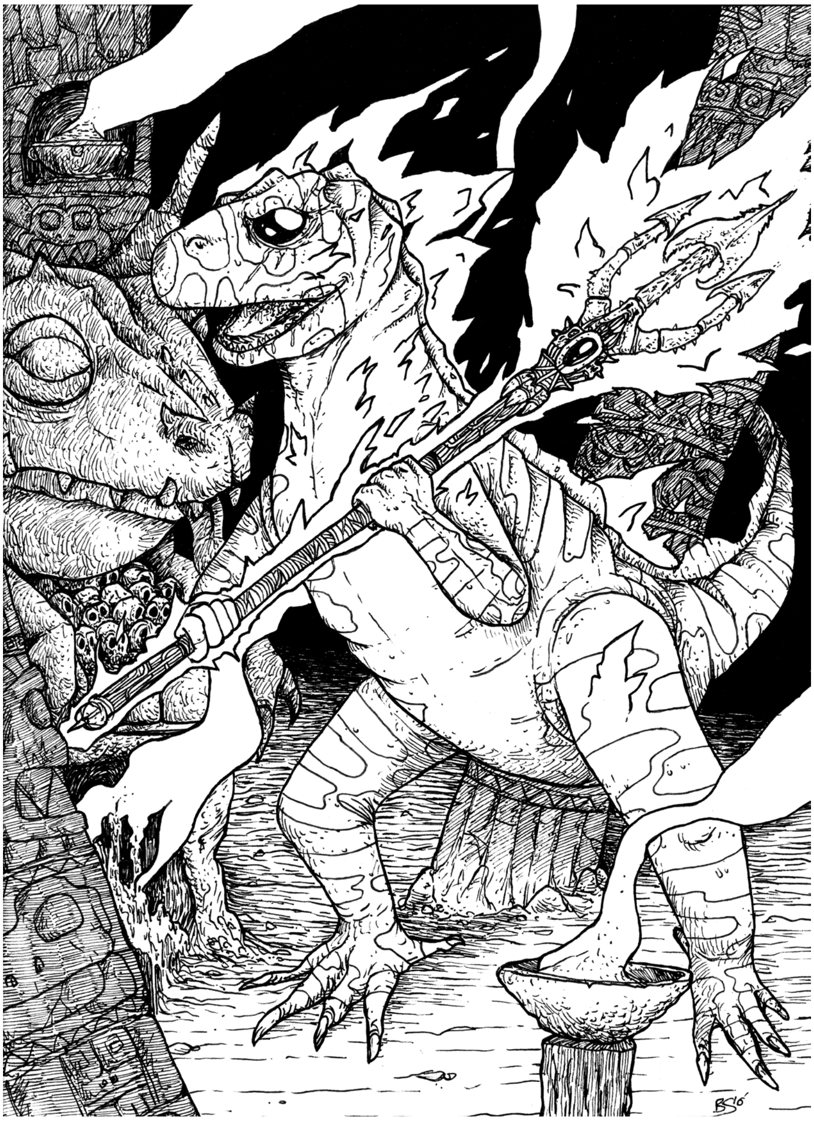
SKILL: 10 (Adult); 6 (Young); 3 (Eft)
STAMINA: 9 (Adult); 6 (Young); 3 (Eft)
ATTACKS: 2 (Adult & Young); 1 (Eft)
WEAPONS USED: Adult: Trident (as per Spear) or Scimitar (as per Sword) or Large Claw, and Fiery Breath (see below); Young: Small Bite and Fiery Breath (see below); Eft: Small Bite
HABITAT: Magical Plane of Fire, Volcanic areas, Caves, Dungeons, Ruins
NUMBER ENCOUNTERED: 1 (Adult); 1-6 (Young); 1-6 (Eft)
TYPE: Elemental
REACTION: Unfriendly-Hostile
INTELLIGENCE: High (Adult); Low (Young & Eft)

Not to be confused with the small amphibians of the same name, SALAMANDERS are a race of strange lizard-like creatures from the Magical Plane of Fire. Over time, whether through summonings gone wrong or by entering unguarded magic portals, they have spread to Titan and established small colonies in the warmer areas of the world. Here they are sometimes encountered by unfortunate adventurers exploring ruined temples or volcanic tunnels. There are three distinct stages to their development, best summarized by Incendiare the Pyromancer in his grimoire *The Life Cycle of the Salamander* as follows:

- Eft: This is a small, supposedly harmless, orange-coloured larval stage that resembles its lizard-like amphibian namesake. Salamander Efts can follow simple instructions and are sometimes used as familiars by sorcerers specializing in fire magic.
- Young: This intermediate form is a much larger sulphur-yellow lizard-creature over a metre long, with weird gill structures and the ability to breathe fire at its foes. Anyone fighting a Young Salamander must roll a die every time the Salamander wins an Attack Round. If they roll a 6, the Salamander has spat a gobbet of flame at them and they must deduct 4 STAMINA points instead of 2. Worse, if the attack happens on a Fireday, then the Salamander will use this attack on a roll of 5 or 6!
- Adult: The adult stage is a fiery reptilian humanoid, around two to three metres in height, with cruel intelligence and a tendency to use riddles and conundrums in conversation. If their victims are unable to answer, or the Salamander is simply bored, it will attack with its claws or a blackened iron weapon such as a trident or scimitar. Adult Salamanders disdain the use of armour, but will breathe a jet of flame at their foes every other Attack Round in addition to their normal attack. This must be avoided by rolling equal to or under one's SKILL score. Failure to do so results in the loss of 2 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point as the victim is literally burned alive.

Like some other supernatural creatures, Salamanders can be banished back to their home plane by speaking aloud their true name. These are obviously a closely guarded secret, as someone knowing a Salamander's name can bargain with them and get them to act as a powerful guardian or mercenary of sorts. According to the notes of Incendiare, Salamanders dwell in great brass citadels on their magical home plane, where they work alongside allied races such as Fire Elementals and Devlins. They are mortal enemies of the Phoenix however, as these enchanted birds enjoying feasting on young Salamanders!

[Originally appeared in *Warlock* Issue 7, *The Temple of Testing*:



p. 31 (53), p. 35 (92), p. 38 (112), p. 42 (196); *Seas of Blood*: (216), (308), (317), (377); *Phantoms of Fear*: (117), (165), (174), (213), (219), (313); *Stormslayer*: (249), (295), (314), (356); *Fighting Fantasy: The Introductory Role-playing Game*: p188]

SAND SQUID

by Andrew Whitworth and Andrew Wright

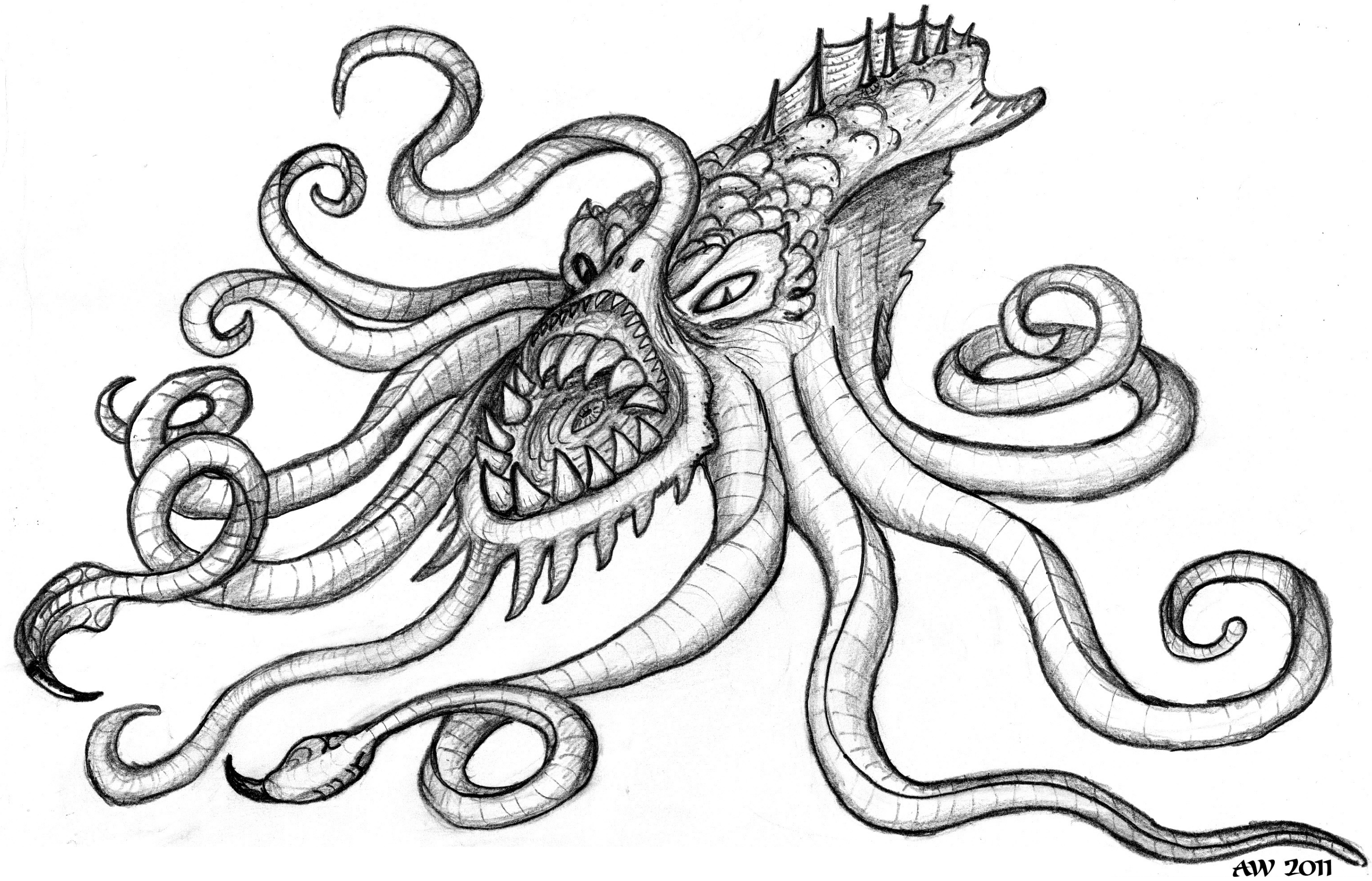
SKILL: 8
STAMINA: 9
ATTACKS: 4
WEAPONS USED: Tentacles (as per Large Claws) and Large Bite
HABITAT: Caves, Seashores, Deserts
NUMBER ENCOUNTERED: 1
TYPE: Mollusc
REACTION: Unfriendly
INTELLIGENCE: Low

> "…there we were, marooned upon a blasted strand of the Skull Coast. Trekking northwards across the windswept dunes we prayed daily to the gods for deliverance. But they did not listen. Instead, a hideous creature that was all tentacles surrounding a gnashing mouth erupted from the sands and slew two sailors. Bhorvak the mercenary leader reacted first, and put a crossbow bolt between its eyes, staining the seashore with foul-smelling black ink…"
>
> - Tales of A Salamonian Naval Captain.

SAND SQUIDS are a strange type of squid that have taken up a terrestrial existence, rather than the sea-dwelling life of their ancestors. They are rare, but widely distributed throughout sandy caverns, beaches, and deserts across Titan. Fearsome ambush predators, they typically wait just under the sands until they detect the presence of approaching food. Then they erupt from the dunes, revealing a bloated, sack-like body, adorned with muscular tentacles, each ending in a barbed hook. These entangle and trap the beast's prey, dragging it towards an enormous mouth studded with curved and crushing teeth. As a result, anyone attacked by a Sand Squid must reduce their SKILL by 2 points for the duration of the battle as they are hampered both by the creature's flailing tentacles and the shifting sands underfoot.

The history of the Sand Squid is somewhat obscure. A related type from Zamarra is known with stinging tentacles rather than grasping ones (6 successful hits causes the victim to lose 1 point of SKILL permanently unless magically cured). The alchemist Plidor, a specialist in the study of Titan's more fearsome cephalopods, suggests the Sand Squid is likely related to the larger Chthonian Trapper of northern Allansia, which is another terrestrial squid-like creature. Plidor also notes that adapting themselves for terrestrial living is a common trait of convergence among Titan's cephalopod species. Other distantly related types that have also given up an aquatic existence include the Saltsucker octopus of the Scythera Desert in Khul, and the mysterious, cave-dwelling Strangler found in the vicinity of the Scamder river-valley.

[Originally appeared in *Warlock* Issue 6, *The Dark Chronicles of Anakendis*: p. 30 (2), p. 31 (30), p. 41 (180), p. 42 (196); and perhaps *Fangs of Fury*: (54)]



ARION GAMES
http://www.arion-games.com

CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

and

Fighting Fantazine

present an

Advanced Fighting Fantasy Competition!

With the new version of *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* almost upon us, we've teamed up with Arion Games and Cubicle 7 Entertainment to give you a chance to win copies of the forthcoming *AFF* books: *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*, *Out of the Pit* and *Titan*.

To be in to win them, YOUR mission is to pen an original, entertaining, and imaginative short multi-player adventure using the original *AFF* rules as outlined in *Dungeoneer*, *Blacksand!* and *Allansia*.

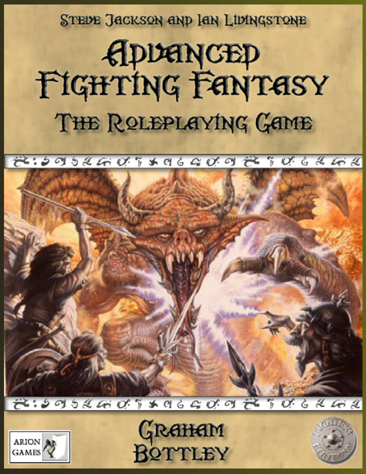
Author of the new *AFF* series Graham Bottley will be judging the entries and picking the winner, who will not only be given copies of the new books, but have their adventure published in a future issue of this magazine for all to play and enjoy.

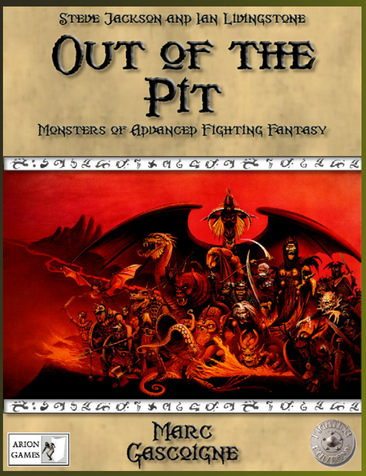
Criteria for entry:

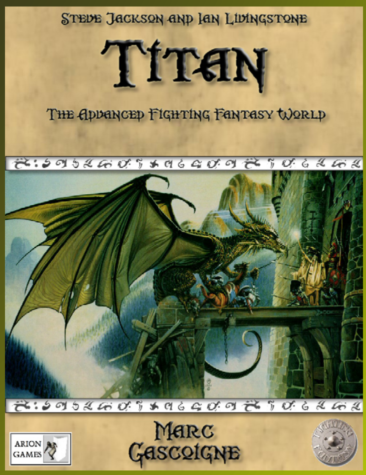
- Your adventure must feature no more than two locations
- Your adventure must feature no more than five major NPCs (Non-Player Characters)
- Your adventure must be set somewhere on the world of Titan
- Any maps needed for the adventure are to be supplied by yourself
- Please keep the length of the adventure to about 10, 000 words

Deadline for entries: June 10th, 2011

Please email your entries along with your postal contact details (using the subject line "AFF Competition Entry") to:
fightingfantazine@gmail.com


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
The Roleplaying Game
Graham Bottley
ARION GAMES


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Out of the Pit
Monsters of Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Marc Gascoigne
ARION GAMES


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Titan
The Advanced Fighting Fantasy World
Marc Gascoigne
ARION GAMES

http://www.arion-games.com/
http://www.cubicle7.co.uk

--- The Magic Quest ---

Ian Brocklehurst pens the first entry in a new irregular column in which any fan can take a page to explain how they became a fan of *Fighting Fantasy* and what it means to them personally. If you are keen to contribute your own tale of *Fighting Fantasy* fandom, contact the Editor.

The earliest memory I have of encountering a *Fighting Fantasy* book would have to stretch back to around late '86 or early '87, when I lived in Perth, Scotland. On visiting the house of my Mother's childhood best friend, who is also the mother of three daughters, I saw on either a bookshelf or tabletop surface *Fighting Fantasy: The Introductory Role-playing Game*. I was immediately taken by the image of the savage looking tiger-man bursting out of the die on the cover and, even though I don't exactly remember, I must have had a look inside that day.

That book passed into my possession, where it still belongs to this day. I can't recall the exact circumstances as to how this came about, but I can say I didn't steal it. Most likely it was a 'going-away' gift, as in the summer of '87 my family moved to a village in Derbyshire, England. I think I must have asked if I could have the book from the eldest daughter to whom it belonged and being a good sport she gave it to me. Now, although the book was mine and I'm sure I read it several times, there was no other contact with *Fighting Fantasy* at that point in my life. My reading habits at the end of the '80s involved the old Target novelizations of *Doctor Who* stories. I can honestly say I never noticed any *Fighting Fantasy* books on the shelves in shops.

Three years passed and my family moved again, this time staying in England to Boston, Lincolnshire. It was here in the county in which I was born that my immersion into the world of Titan would begin in my final year at Primary School. A classmate brought to the school one day a copy of *The Forest of Doom* to read during our "reading hour". The interesting story behind that book was that it belonged to his Mother. She had gone on a lengthy rail journey and had purchased the gamebook at the station as something to read on the trip. On seeing *The Forest of Doom* and having the opportunity to play it I was off course reminded that I had a similar book that wasn't a solo adventure, but in fact for several players.

Within a matter of weeks I had GMed my first *Fighting Fantasy* adventure with four classmates – *The Wishing Well* from *Fighting Fantasy: The Introductory Role-playing Game*. One of the adventurers would later go on to play in the nation's football Premier League! Soon after that game the opportunity arose for the same band of adventurers were dared to enter *Shaggradd's Hives of Peril*. During the summer of '91 as I prepared to move onto Secondary School I purchased my first solo-adventure book *Beneath Nightmare Castle*.

What made me choose that title? Was it the image of the Spiked Maiden reaching out to stab me with her talons or the wonder in my mind as to what could lie beneath Nightmare Castle? I feel the latter thrilled me the most into getting this book. Nightmare Castle sounds pretty creepy, but what lies beneath it must be far worse. It's funny to think back then I thought the book was written by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone even though the word 'present' is visible on the cover. I'm not sure when I realised Peter Darvill-Evans was the author? I guess that's one of those mysteries of growing up that you can't put a finger on.

Once I started Secondary School in September '91 then it would seem *Fighting Fantasy* fever swept through the four classes that made up the First Year of the all-boys Grammar School I attended. Did my friends and I start it? I'm not entirely sure. One thing was for certain almost every student in our class of twenty-four had at least one *Fighting Fantasy* title. For my own collection to expand I started looking round second hand bookshops, car boot sales and charity shops to find titles as well as occasionally buying a new copy. By the summer of '92 I had upgraded to *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* and was GMing using my copies of *Dungeoneer* and *Blacksand!*. I remember walking my dog and finding a five pound note in the field behind my house. That stoke of fortune got me *Island of the Lizard King* in '94. One of my last purchases in the early '90s I have a vivid memory of is when I bought *Allansia*. I was in WHSmiths and as *White Dwarf* didn't cover non-Games Workshop material and I had no internet access to forums that would reveal the latest gaming news, I was surprised to see *Allansia* on the shelf. I was the only GM to have a copy and to be honest it's a title I rarely see second-hand excluding eBay searches.

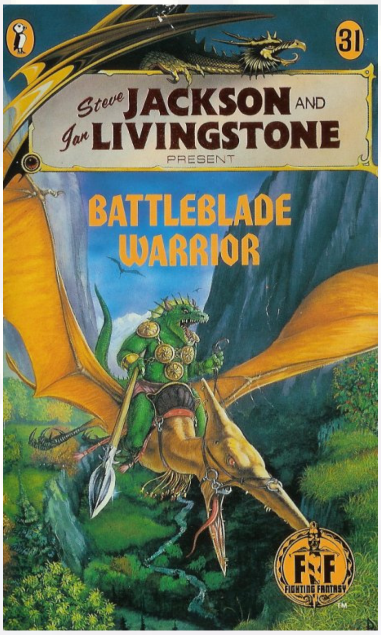
My connection with *Fighting Fantasy* died down a bit in the late 90's as I concentrated more on running campaigns with Games Workshop's *Necromunda*. As an under-graduate at the University of Central Lancashire I was able to complete my *Sorcery!* series by 2001 thanks to the abundance of copies in Lancashire. I even picked up *The Sorcery Spell Book* for twenty pence! For me *Fighting Fantasy* and *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* are one of the reasons I love role-playing and I feel that having never seen *Fighting Fantasy: The Introductory Role-playing Game* in Perth, I imagine the hobbies I had as I grew up may well have been rather different to those I still have to this day.

Everything I Really Need to Know I Learnt from Reading *Fighting Fantasy* Gamebooks
Part 4

Much of what you learn when playing any *Fighting Fantasy* book is only really going to be of use to you the next time you attempt the same book – things like 'Don't use that gem' (*Battleblade Warrior*), 'Don't drink that potion' (*Slaves of the Abyss*), 'Don't read this gamebook' (*Sky Lord*). Nevertheless, the books do also illustrate general principles that have some applicability to everyday life. Join **Ed Jolley** as he seeks to separate the tibia from the trivia.

Battleblade Warrior

To save your people from the Lizard Man armies, you must fit the Eyes of Telak into the Arm of Telak. (What can I say about Telak? Great fighter, but lousy grasp of anatomy.) Naturally, if you should fail to find the Arm of Telak, you are utterly doo– oh! One of the Lizard Men you're out to destroy just turns up with the Arm, and if you have any shiny things, you can create a distraction that gives you a shot at acquiring the Arm anyway. While it's not so unusual to have gamebook villains carelessly leaving the means of their destruction just lying around in their lairs, one who actually fetches it for you is a new twist. If only Razaak were as obliging...
Moral: You don't always have to do absolutely everything yourself. Learning when to delegate can make work a lot easier.



Sky Lord

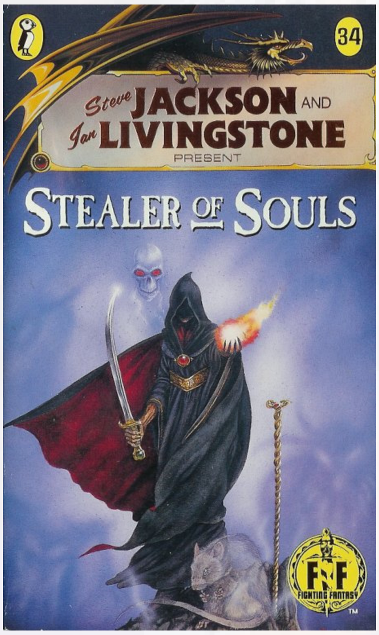
Spare a little sympathy for L'Bastin. After his obsession with genetic engineering leads to the loss of his job and his becoming a fugitive from justice (wanted for, among other things, theft, unfair dismissal, DNA piracy and unethical use of a pineapple), he directs all his energies into continuing the sort of experimentation that has become his all-consuming passion, and where does it get him? Imprisoned and tortured by one of his own creations. At least when Martin Allen brought into being the ill-advised monstrosity that is *Sky Lord*, the worst it did for him was to garner bad reviews.
Moral: Turning your hobby into a full-time job rarely ends up being as much fun as you expect.

Stealer of Souls

Go charging into the cottage to rescue the prisoner within, and you get a 16-ton weight in the face (note: actual weight may be less Pythonesque). Show caution when approaching the next prisoner you encounter, and this gives the concealed Dark Priest time to hit you with a very nasty spell. Sometimes, the only thing you learn from making mistakes is how to make different ones.
Moral: What works best in one place might not be so suitable for another.

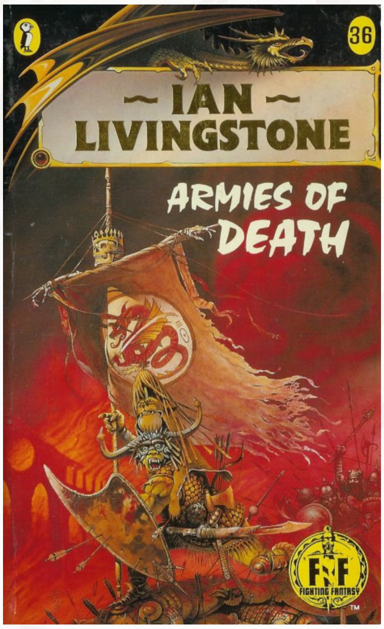
Slaves of the Abyss

The Sealed Locket which Ramedes gives you just before getting himself killed contains an ancient prophecy, indicating the new ruler of Kallamehr to be none other than... Ramedes. Brilliant. So, centuries ago, some seer looked far enough into the future to tell that Ramedes was the best man to take over from Lady Carolina, but not quite far enough to see that he'd be skewered by some jobsworth of a guard before he could be recognised as the new Baron. Should've scried just that little bit harder, mate.
Moral: It's always good to have a back-up plan in case your original one turns out to be unworkable.



Daggers of Darkness

When caught by the Yigenik, telling them that you are one of the Select means that you get taken off for assorted tests that could give you a shot at acquiring one of the medallions (though, this being a Luke Sharp book, they're more likely to just kill you). When caught by the Korkut, telling them that you are one of the Select means that a treacherous guard tries to kill you. And then you get taken off for assorted tests that could give you a shot at acquiring one of the medallions (though, this being a Luke Sharp book, they're more likely to just kill you).
Moral: What works best in one place might not be so suitable for another. But sometimes you can get away with the same thing twice.



Armies of Death

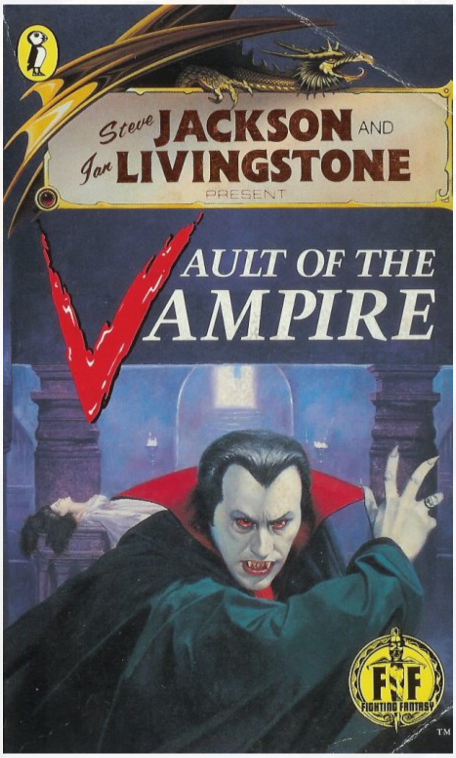
It's understandable that the Oracle should want to get away from people constantly pestering him for hot tips on the Zengis pie-eating contest, biographical details of good wizards and directions to Rubble Street, but his isolationist ways could severely inconvenience the adventurer who wants to know how to defeat Agglax's Chaotic hordes. Quite apart from his lethal booby traps and arbitrary demands for items (which, to be fair, are pretty much de rigueur in much of Allansia), there's also the unusual problem that he demands to know how much our hero paid for the random items he wants. Clearly, in his family, it's not 'the thought that counts' when exchanging gifts on festive occasions.

Moral: Don't throw away your receipts unless you're absolutely sure you won't need them.

Portal of Evil

There are many occasions in this adventure when not attacking is the wiser course of action. Time after time, a belligerent approach winds up costing you an advantage, an opportunity, maybe even your life. So what should you do when you finally confront Horfak, the closest equivalent to a 'boss' villain the book has? Carve him up, of course. This is *Fighting Fantasy*, not Wussy Pacifist Hippy Fantasy.

Moral: What works best in one place might not be so suitable for another. Sometimes you can get away with the same thing twice, maybe even three times. But don't push your luck too much.



Vault of the Vampire

The most obvious indication that this is a fantasy adventure is the hero's being able to spend the break in the fight against the Vampire Count knocking back multiple large measures of brandy and coming off the better as a result. By rights, he should spend the second bout staggering around, slurring insults and throwing wild punches that mostly fail to hit the mark. Even if he somehow managed to win the fight, he'd be more likely to throw up in the coffin than stake Reiner, and there'd be little chance of his unlocking Nastassia's chains without repeatedly dropping the keys and making lewd remarks. If Katarina timed her arrival well, she wouldn't even need to use magic to get him proclaiming her 'my best mate' and swearing undying love to her.

Moral: Know your limits, and drink responsibly.

Fangs of Fury

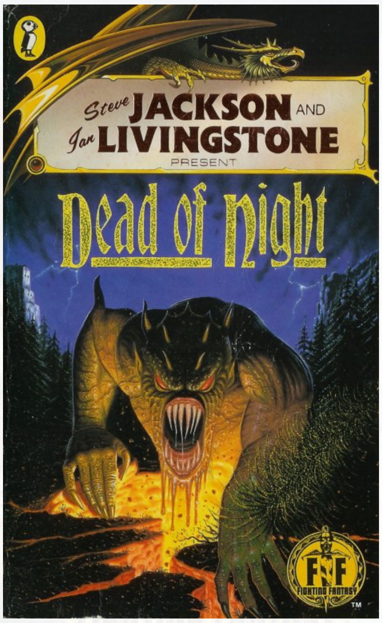
Well, this one's easy – the author even spells it out in the first paragraph of the Background section: 'Never volunteer'. And in case you didn't get the point, the adventure includes assorted illustrative encounters to underline the message. Offer to retrieve the fiddle that a poor old woman has dropped down a well (is that really the best story she could think of?), and you get attacked by a Horned Devil. Choose to be the playmate (no, not that kind) of the child sorcerer, and he forces you to fight a Thing (which, from the description, sounds a lot more like Cousin Itt). But hang on a minute! Those are both easy fights, which lead to potential benefits. And if you hadn't accepted the mission at the start of the adventure, Zamarra would have fallen to the invaders, and you'd have been butchered. Volunteering, by contrast, can lead to your acquiring considerable wealth and a massive promotion. Is it just me, or is 'don't do this or you might gain lots of money and status' a pretty ineffective deterrent?

Moral: Rules don't necessarily apply in absolutely every single situation, so don't get too dogmatic about them.

Dead of Night

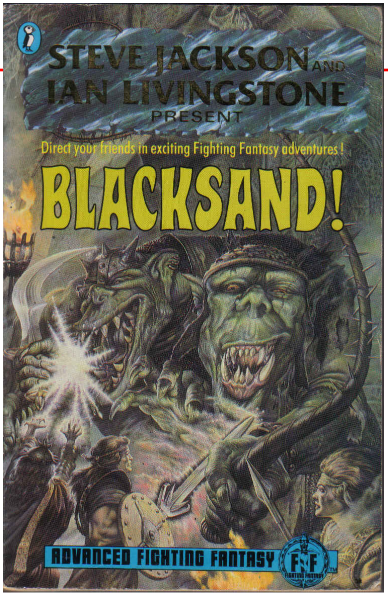
With Astonbury devastated by Demon-Plague, Axmoor consumed by a Land-Blight, Stanford suffering regular raids from Skeleton riders (disappointingly, that's Skeletons which ride something, rather than beings that ride Skeletons) and Orcish raiders pillaging Dunningham, the Netherworld Sorcerers are deeply concerned that the balance of power is slipping too far towards the side of Good. This is understandable once it becomes clear where they get their information on the state of things in Titan. Biased reporting from Myurrdoch's media empire has given them a spectacularly wrong-headed view of things, and like all too many of those who rely on it as a source of news, they don't take kindly to being told that they've been misinformed. I bet their online counterparts wish that Ignore Lists were as effective as the magical void to which the Sorcerers can banish anyone who disagrees with them.

Moral: It's rarely worth getting into an argument with the closed-minded.



SPOILER WARNING: Plot spoilers for *Blacksand!*

Ever sat and stared at your copies of the original *Fighting Fantasy* RPG books or the later *AFF* editions? Ever wondered what it might be like to actually get a group of friends together to play such adventures? **Adrian Young** presents an actual account of just such a *Fighting Fantasy* RPG campaign, featuring real Player Characters and outcomes from an adventure played over three four-hour sessions.


STEVE JACKSON AND
IAN LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT
Direct your friends in exciting Fighting Fantasy adventures!
BLACKSAND!
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
FF

CHRONICLE OF HEROES:

A Shadow Over Blacksand

The warrior El Ravager, mighty knight Marcellos, Elven Ranger Alexis and feisty warrior Tetra returned to Salamonis triumphant after their defeat of Xortan Throg. They claimed their reward and enjoyed the good life in what was now becoming their home city. During their stay, Ravager seriously contemplated retiring and taking up King Salamon's offer of a post as Captain in the Salamonian Army but he still felt that even greater things lay ahead. As for Marcellos, he was certain that his fame now preceded him wherever he went, and was going to make sure the word was reinforced with his presence so that he would become the stuff of legend. Tetra was also beginning to believe the hype surrounding the Heroes of Allansia, who had become thought of as the Great Hope of the Civilised World. Archbishop Kalivan told Tetra she had been blessed by Titan himself – the Father of the World – and that as long as she forewent wearing Armour she would never fall against Evil! As such, Tetra swore never to don armour. For Alexa, it was off to the Forest of Yore, to be with her Elven kind, and tell tales of her great adventures.

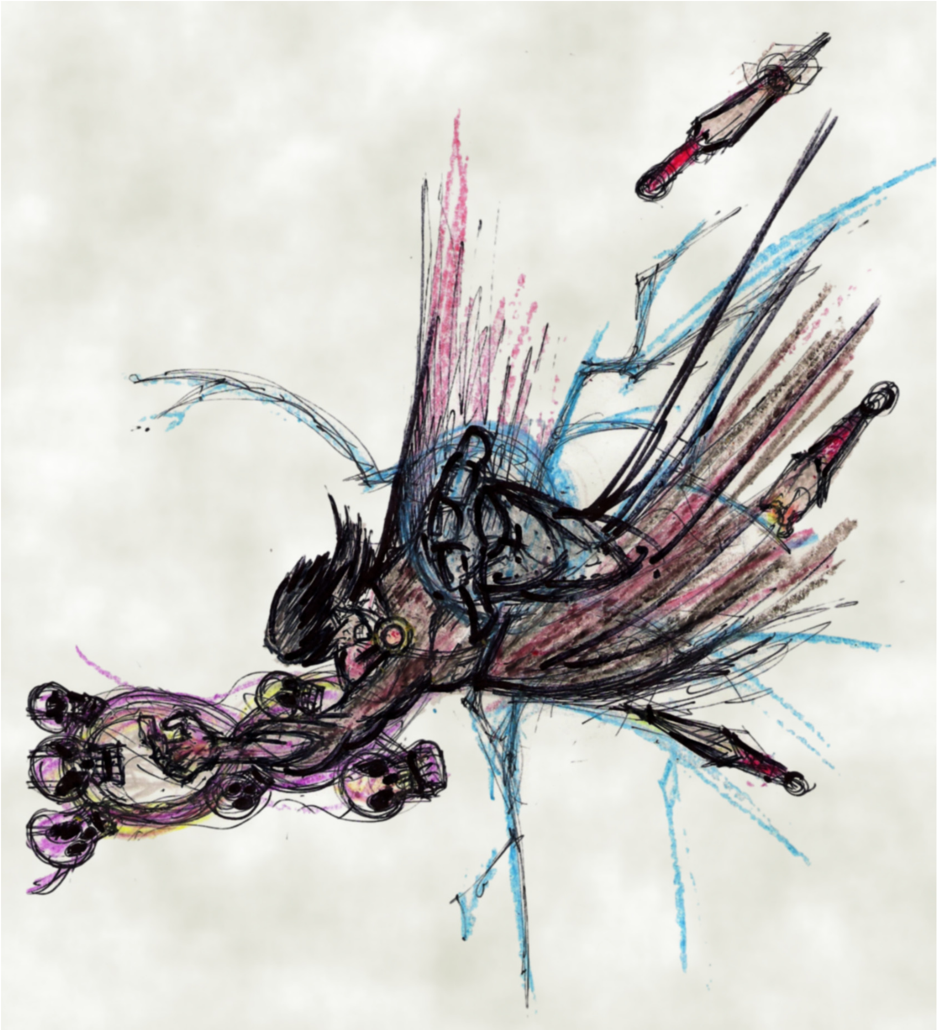
Days in the mighty city passed. And the hunger for adventure returned.

While in Salamonis, the Heroes recruited another wizard to their ranks. Joe Quarterstaff, yet another graduate from Salamonis' Great School of Wizardry, would take the place of the fallen E'lantro. Joe (or JQ to his friends) had lived in Salamonis all his life, and was inspired by the songs and tales that were weaved about the Heroes. As a wizard his powers would be indispensable, and JQ was ready to brave the wider untamed worlds, and follow in the footsteps of such famous sorcerers as Gareth Yaztromo or Arakor Nicodemus. No sooner had JQ joined than the newly formed party was called upon for service. A travelling merchant named WALDO offered an exorbitant amount of gold in return for the protection of his Merchant caravan. The deal was doubly sweet for the adventurers, as Waldo was travelling to Meerham, near the Whitewater coast, where the party had already planned to board a merchant ship to speed their travels around Allansia.

The Heroes journeyed uneventfully to the small village of Meerham and were greeted by three of the locals. Mokum the Miller - elder of the town; Brass – a rich trader from Blacksand; and VELDIK – bodyguard to Brass. Sir Marcellos had seen Veldik before, in Blacksand, challenging passers-by to a Sword duel (see *Revenge of the Sorcerer*). Mokum offered the heroes an opportunity to trade, and Rav went about purchasing some items and weapons. Suddenly, Waldo darted out of the tent where he had been negotiating with Brass, shouting 'Murder!' Veldik, Ravager and Marcellos stormed in but all they could find was the slumped (dead) body of Brass. After some confusion and fighting words between Veldik and the heroes, Ravager lit an ornate candle on Brass' table, and the assassin emerged – a SILENT DEATH. The creature cast a veil of silence and threw Rav and Veldik around a bit. But the SILENT DEATH was soon dispatched by the combined magical swords of Veldik and Marcellos. Rav could only watch as he possessed no enchanted weapon and couldn't inflict any damage on the SILENT DEATH.

Quarterstaff entered the tent and cast Reveal, pronouncing the tent safe from further magical traps. A quick search by Tetra also uncovered some of Brass' personal letters. The heroes then agreed to accompany their new brother-in-arms VELDIK back to the dreaded city of Blacksand. The plan was to find out who was responsible for planting the SILENT DEATH and killing Brass. In return, Veldik said Brass' son Torbul would pay Waldo the agreed some of the original deal, and that meant the heroes not only got paid, but also would have an opportunity to rid Allansia of yet another evil doer. Veldik had taken a fancy to Tetra, and travelled with her in the front caravan. Before long, the Heroes arrived at the cesspool that was Port Blacksand.

Veldik's wagon, in which the wizard Quarterstaff also rode, passed the black armoured TROLLS of the Blacksand Gates unopposed. Waldo travelled with Rav and Marcellos in the second wagon but things didn't go as smoothly. When stopped at the Blacksand gates, Rav tried the old 'we-are-on-a-mission-from-Lord-Azzur' story, but that only brought laughter from the foul-breathed TROLLS, who told him they heard their cousin fall for that one last week! In the end, Wal-



High Priest Nagrin

Art: © Nathan Stones, 2011

do's pathetic bumbling and Rav's burly arrogance was going to result in one of two things. A nasty fight; or the handing over of a massive entry tax that the Trolls demanded. With Marcellos warning that 'nothing good could come of a fight', handover the coin they did, leaving WALDO broke, and Rav countering the jibes from Quarterstaff, Tetra and Marcellos with "it wasn't our gold in the first place!"

Welcome back to Blacksand.

Veldik took leave of the party as he had the difficult job of telling Brass' family of the murder of their father/husband. The Heroes agreed to give him a couple of hours to do so and in the meantime visit their old drinking hole – The Dragon's Tooth Inn. Perhaps King Salamon's contact Halim Thrumbar would be there to help them? By the time they had walked through the bustling market to the Dragons Tooth, Ravager was ready to punch heads, still seething from the TROLL incident. After knocking out a local who looked at him the wrong way, Rav soon settled down with a mug of ale or three. Marcellos did his usual rounds of introductions and soon had the Inn buzzing with tales of the 'Adventures of the Mighty Marcellos'. Tetra had the locals ogling her and after a few shouted rounds, she garnered some information on Brass. While Quarterstaff partook in a nice drop of Sherry!

Halim wasn't about, but Tetra discovered that Brass was an honourable man, and very rich. However, rumours abound that he had recent dealings with the powerful and sinister Guild of Thieves. With some time still up their sleeves, Tetra and Quarterstaff decided to drop into Nicodemus' hut under the Singing Bridge. But he wasn't any help, nor particularly happy to see them back in this vile Port (particularly because last time Tetra drank all his rum!), and he scoffed that he had far more important things to do than solve a simple murder (like distilling the perfect brandy). Meanwhile, Ravager and Marcellos visited a clairvoyant named Madame Star in the Market Square. She scryed into the future (for a few gold pieces) and saw a horrible sight: a figure in gold, rampaging through the streets, killing all before it. Madame Star gazed at Marcellos' golden armour. Could he be the Force of Destruction that she foresaw?

With no time to waste, the Heroes regrouped and headed off to the House of Brass. The wailing of Brass' daughter Laurissa could be heard at the end of Field Street. Brass' wife was more composed but clearly in mourning. And the new master of the House, Torbul, was resolute on helping the party find who killed his father. The sleep-walking Torbul mentioned that his father has recently fallen out with a strange religious cult in the hope they could cure his strange sleep walking ailment. But the Cult swindled his father's money. Unfortunately Torbul knew not who they were or where they could be found. But Torbul was friends with Rannik, one of the five Master Thieves of the Thieves Guild. If anyone could help, it was Rannik. The heroes bid the Brass family farewell, leaving Waldo at the House and Veldik to guard the residents (though Veldik asked Tetra if she would also like to remain as well, nudge nudge). A quick walk and they were at the Noose – a section of Port Blacksand run by the Guild of Thieves.

The heroes entered a large house, home to an unfriendly and motley crew of vagabonds, cut throats and thugs. Ravager strode confidently and arrogantly through the smelly mass of bodies. The others trailed behind cautiously. Ravager tried to assert his authority by slapping around two ruffians that were blocking his way. Then it was on for young and old. The large thieving gang was far from afraid and determined to teach these 'smart aleck adventurer types' a lesson. Ravager drew his double handed sword and began swinging wildly. Tetra fought valiantly, but they were hopelessly outnumbered. Quarterstaff cast a shield spell to hold the ugly hordes at bay while Marcellos cleared a path by charging through with his shield. Just as Ravager cut down the first of his opponents, RANNIK appeared at the top of the stairwell and yelled STOP! Everyone froze. Except Ravager who skewered the second of his victims!

After a meeting with RANNIK, who spent most of the time trying to impress Tetra, RANNIK agreed to help the Heroes locate the mysterious cult as a favour to his murdered friend Brass. Rannik needed a couple of hours to locate the cult, and in the meantime asked whether Tetra would like to stay at his loft for a fine wine or two (wink wink). Tetra graciously declined and joined the rest of her party at the House of Brass. As night fell, Rannik and one of his best thieves JAK, met the heroes and led them to an abandoned boarded-up house in Wall Street. They bade the Adventurers good luck and disappeared into the shadows. The heroes snuck into the house through an upstairs window and after groping around in the blackness came upon a stone stairwell that descended deep below Blacksand.

A large cavernous temple opened before them - with huge pillars and a candle-lit altar overshadowed by a huge brass statue. They tried to sneak undetected towards the altar but evil ELIMITE PRIESTS lay in wait. Ambush! The Heroes had uncovered the secret sect of Elim and now had to be silenced. But Elim's servants were no match for our brave and tough adventurers. Once the last of the Servants was killed, the powerful High Priest NAGRIN entered from a side door. Nagrin created black portals in the marble floor from which DEMONSPAWN pulled themselves into this world from the Abyss. No normal weapons could harm them, so it was left to Marcellos' Sword and Quarterstaff's magical Fire spells. As they fought, Tetra attacked Nagrin, only to be smashed against the stone wall by a Force bolt (the first of many fired against her). Quarterstaff then fell foul to Nagrin's Fear spell and cowered in the corner. Ravager tried to get close to Nagrin to use throwing daggers, but already a few missile weapons cast at Nagrin had merely deflected off him!

As Marcellos sent another Demonspawn back to the Abyss, Tetra summoned her ICON of GOOD (which was granted to her by the Gods, (see Riddling Reaver) and sent it against Nagrin. The High Priest cast a powerful Restraining spell to halt the ICON and this was just enough of a distraction for Ravager to hit him with a flask of oil, quickly followed up by a flaming candle. As Nagrin's back burst into flames, Marcellos smashed the Jar of Spiders at the High Priests feet, freeing the small black arachnids that instantly transformed into GIANT SPIDERS. Most of the Spiders immediately attacked Nagrin, while Tetra protected Quarterstaff from a few stray ones that threatened to sink their fangs into her involuntarily cowering wizardly companion.

As NAGRIN screamed from burns, spider bites and a well placed Ravager dagger, Marcellos darted under the High Priest's guard and supplanted his Sword of Timakron through the evil Priest's solar plexus and out through his shoulder blades. The battle was won! A quick search of the Elimite temple revealed some Spell books and magical items (all of which Quarterstaff took), and a letter written to Nagrin from someone the heroes had met before - SARGON THE BLACK – Primate of the Revived Church of Elim (see Revenge of the Sorcerer). The letter also detailed instructions from Sargon regarding the murder of Brass who had 'served his purpose'. Thus, the wheel had turned! How ironic that the one person who helped them defeat Xortan Throg in the Blacksand Sewers by obtaining the Crystal of Power and leading them to Throg's lair was now revealed as the one who orchestrated the Murder!

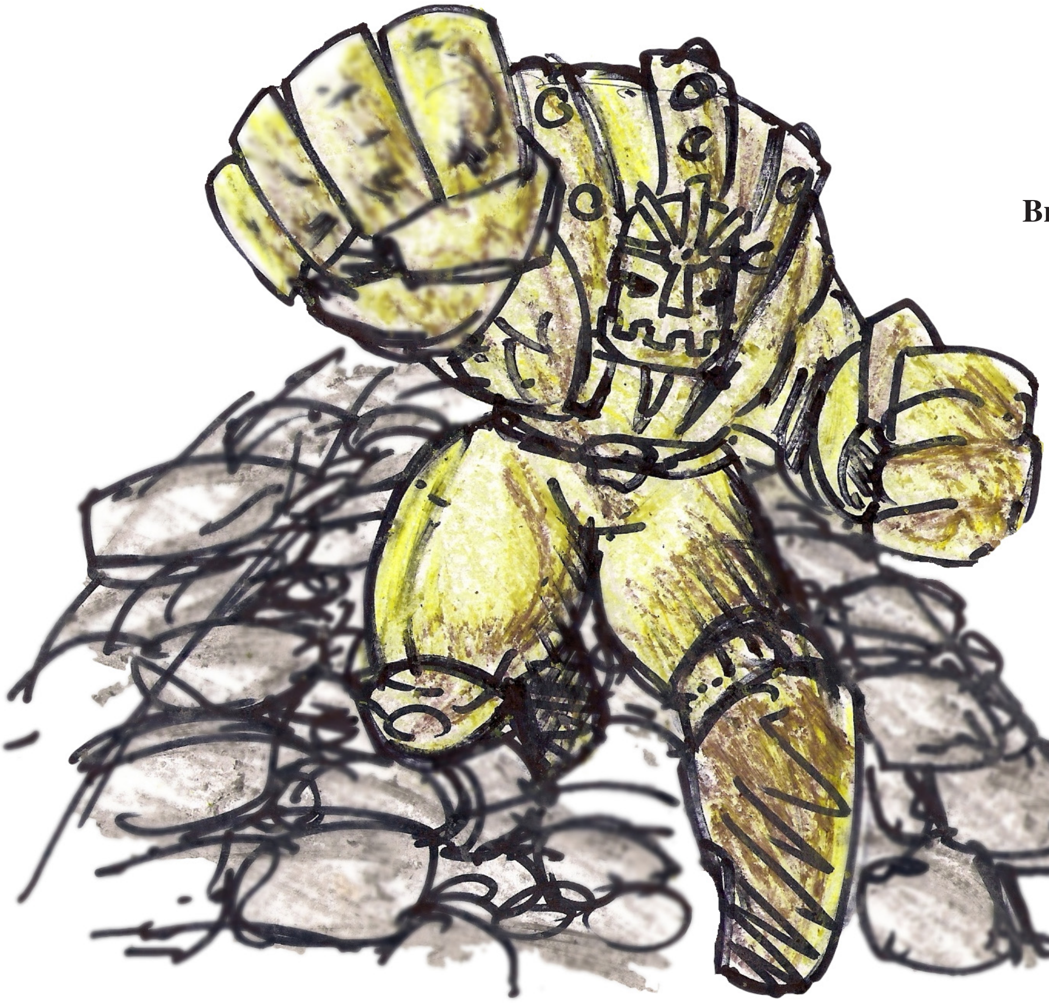
Quarterstaff quickly left the building to show Nicodemus what he had found. As he left, he saw the Dwarven Cleric Silverarm scampering down Wall Street having returned from her hiatus to Stonebridge (coincidence?). Quarterstaff gave a quick summation of events as Silverarm entered the house. Down below, Ravager had begun desecrating the Elimite chamber by defecating on the blood soaked alter (how refined!). Suddenly the huge giant statue that towered behind him, once silent and unmoving, bellowed an arcane roar and tore itself from the stone wall. It crashed the altar into pieces, as once again Ravager found his sword ineffectual against a magical creature – his blade simply deflected off the BRASS GOLEM'S gleaming golden hide. Even Marcellos' normally lethal attacks made no impact on the giant! Tetra formed the last line of defence as the GOLEM marched towards the stone staircase exit. Her god-given ICON of GOOD stood in the GOLEM'S path, but even it was battered away with ease and sent hurtling into one of the huge pillars. The heroes were dumbfounded, and simply let the GOLEM leave, and followed in its wake.

Silverarm had never seen anything like it before, and moved aside, as the GOLEM burst out of the staircase and raised its giant mass into and through the two storey's of the house, bringing heavy wooden beams toppling. The Heroes all dived through a window as the house collapsed around them. THE GOLEM thundered into the street, tearing down the mainly wooden facades of the Blacksand streets – causing an unprecedented scale of devastation on the general populace as well as any buildings that were in the way of its massive arm width (Madame Star's prediction had come true). Blacksand citizens poured into the streets as anarchy erupted. Some foolishly attacked the GOLEM, only to be squashed or hammered into the ground. Some fought each other, blaming curses, gods and prophecies. Some fled, towards the heavily guarded units that were forming at the gates. Some, like the Heroes, slinked in and out of the grubby side streets, following and watching the Golem's path of destruction from a safe distance.

Ravager and Marcellos quickly made their way to the House of Brass, where they discovered Torbul had disappeared. Veldik frantically searched the streets as conspiracy theories surrounding Torbul's link to the Golem were expounded. Rav and Marcellos joined Veldik who was making a bee line to the Golem as it swung into Field Street. The CAPTAIN of the BLACK GUARD and his TROLL soldiers were massing with crossbows and pikes at the other end should the GOLEM continue to head their way! Meanwhile Tetra was swept off her feet by RANNIK who held the fiery fighter close and led her to Torbul – who he had discovered walking aimlessly in his sleepwear towards the GOLEM! As all the Heroes converged on the brass behemoth, Silverarm cast Spirit Journey - leaving her body behind as a shell - which copped a stray smack in the head from a beggar. Silverarm transported herself in Spirit form inside the GOLEM, and saw within a Mechanical Heart hidden behind a chest plate which pumped a magical Oil of Life through the GOLEM.

"The chest plate!" yelled the Dwarven Guardian of Throff as she returned to her body, "Hit the Chest plate!"

The GOLEM continued to pound its way towards Field Gate and the readied BLACK GUARD. Suddenly, a sleep walking Torbul emerged in front of its deadly path, seemingly unaware of the giant foot that was about to press him into the cobbled streetscape. Rav, Marcellos and Veldik were too far away to help. Veldik yelled out a warning but Torbul seemed



Brass Golem

oblivious to his surroundings. Silverarm was blocked by the maddening crowd and it appeared another Brass was to lose its life. That was until Tetra emerged like an angel from the blackness of one of the alleyways, cheered on by Rannik who new well the alleyways of Blacksand, and side tackled Torbul to safety! Hooray for Tetra! The GOLEM was infuriated, and slammed some Blacksand groupies into the Merchant buildings which were toppling around him.

With Torbul safe, Silverarm cast Befuddle on the GOLEM - stopping it in its tracks and causing it to flail its massive arms in all directions. Veldik charged inside combat range, only to be bashed by the GOLEM's heavy fist and sent flying into an adjacent street. Ravager kept his distance and hurled rocks at the chest plate. Tetra joined in with her daggers (as Rannik guarded Torbul) – and a direct hit from Tetra finally dislodged the plate to reveal an intense blue light! As this was unfolding before the now cheering crowd, Marcellos created a lasso while the Captain of the Guard called his Crossbow team forward. Marcellos then completed the most heroic act of his illustrious career. He hurled the lasso around the GOLEM's towering neck and swung himself onto the GOLEM. A flailing giant hand buffeted him sideways into the second story wall of a damaged shop (the crowd gasped!) and Marcellos used this momentum to his advantage to swing a circle around the GOLEM and land on its back!

As Black Guard crossbow bolts, Rav's rocks and Tetra's daggers continued to rain on the GOLEM, some injuring the Knight, Marcellos swung back to the front of the still befuddled GOLEM and planted his magical Sword deep into the alcove which held the blue glowing Mechanical Heart. Immediately, a fluorescent blue ooze began pouring from the wound and within seconds the BRASS GOLEM had crashed to one knee – then the other – then fully to the hard Blacksand street. Blacksand citizens streamed from everywhere and lifted Marcellos high in the air as Marcellos yelled "You know who I am – I am Marcellos the Mighty – remember my name – and spread the word." Silverarm ran to join the heroes (passing the beggar who hit her earlier and clubbing him unconscious with her hammer). Ravager cursed both Marcellos' luck and his double handed (non-magical) battle sword as Veldik staggered towards them. Tetra avoided a jubilant Rannik's hugging as Torbul woke from his slumber and asked what the fuss was all about.

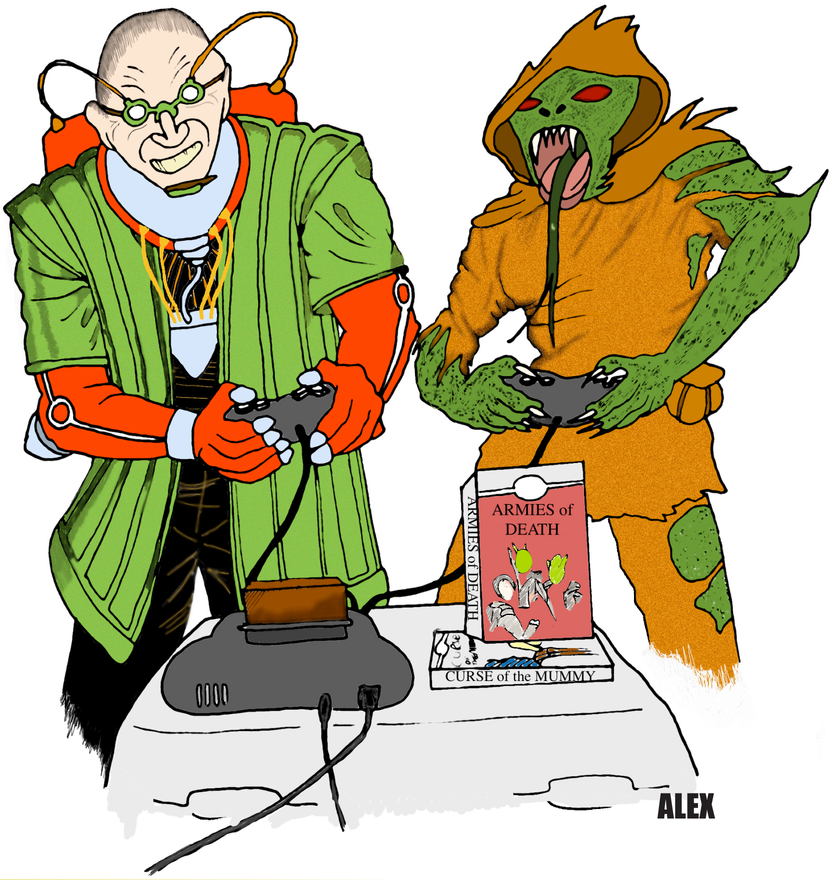
Before the Black Guard could react (and possibly demand that the Heroes pay for all the damage the GOLEM caused), Nicodemus appeared with a cart ready to smuggle them from the vile city. Nicodemus explained that while Nagrin and the Golem had been defeated, SARGON was the one who had to be stopped. The heroes needed to warn King Salamon, and then seek out Nicodemus' good friend the wizard Yaztromo in Darkwood Forest. Rannik said a heart felt goodbye to Tetra (claiming a lock of her hair as keepsake). Veldik finally found solace in his newfound warrior brothers, Marcellos and Ravager. Silverarm and Quarterstaff exchanged Spell recipes. And Torbul completed the financial transaction with Waldo, thus concluding what he initially set out to do in Meerham. As night fell, the Heroes carted their way out of the City of Thieves and towards Salamonis, all too aware that soon they would again be called upon to SAVE THE WORLD FROM EVIL!

FF

THE ARCANE ARCHIVE

The worlds of *Fighting Fantasy* and other gamebooks in review with **Alexander Ballingall**!

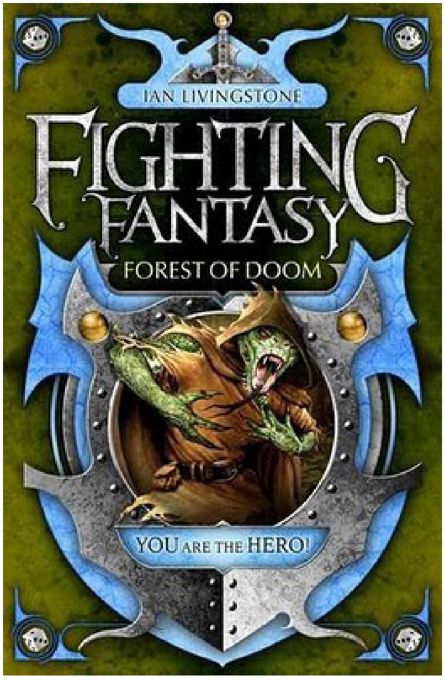
SOME SPOILERS AHEAD!



#13: Forest of Doom

Written by Ian Livingstone • **Illustrated by** Malcom Barter
Wizard Books • **Published** February 3rd 2011 • **RRP** £5.99

As an early entry in the *Fighting Fantasy* series, *Forest of Doom* has a definite "old school" feel to all of it through no fault of its own. It simply *is* an old school gamebook. Taking the formula of hacking away through a dungeon from *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, Ian Livingstone simply transfers this to the interior of a forest (complete with a river through the middle). The immediately disappointing aspect of this repeated formula is that the adventure doesn't have any of the bushwhacking feel a skirmish with a deadly forest ought to have. For practically all of the adventure the player is confined to using obvious, well worn paths through the trees, paths which are all but the tunnels from *Warlock* under a different name.



Another aspect carried over from *Warlock* is the almost universal opportunity to attack people, taken to a Livingstone extreme by the option of attacking the wizard Yaztromo in the opening paragraph, despite having being told to seek out the wizard for help in the "Background". Thus, much of *Forest of Doom* is simply a case of having an encounter with something and then moving straight to the fight (unless you have something more useful in your backpack).

That doesn't mean it is all doom and gloom with regards to the adventure. While he may not be the master of the sprawling epic or intricate narrative, Livingstone is very good at intriguing set pieces. Perhaps the most memorable, of these set pieces, aided by the cover art, is the encounter with the Shape Changer, which serves as a good reminder to the reader of the old adage to not to take anything at face value – especially in a Livingstone adventure. Other memorable moments include the Fire Demon and its little army of Clone Warriors who tend a farm of mushrooms, the Crow on the signpost, and the old man Arragon. Like the Shape Changer, each of these contains moments where not everything is as it appears.

The other motto of the adventure should probably be try, try again. There is a definite sense that you are not expected to be able to complete the adventure in one fell swoop, instead building up a picture of Darkwood Forest through various at-

Art: © Alexander Ballingall, 2011

tempts. Why else would there be a couple of opportunities to consume mushrooms in the game with neither coming with a hint or two as to which one should be eaten and which one should be avoided. In fact, what further strengthens this idea of repeated attempts, is the fact that should you reach Stonebridge without the two parts of the hammer, you can go back through the forest again to find them.

This last point does reveal a limitation to being such an early entry in the series, in that the chance to go back through the forest effectively resets the game and any encounter you previously had with the inhabitants will play out the same way. *Scorpion Swamp*, published a year later, attempted to avoid this through the use of "If you have been here before..." text, and it is a pity that such a simple mechanic didn't occur to Livingstone as it would have increased the replay value and reduced the tedium of mechanically working through material you have already covered.

Malcom Barter's artwork doesn't always help the book, but his depictions of locations and non-humanoids such as the exterior of Yaztromo's tower and the Sting Worm are a definite step up from the sometimes confusing humanoid illustrations like the Gremlins or Werewolf.

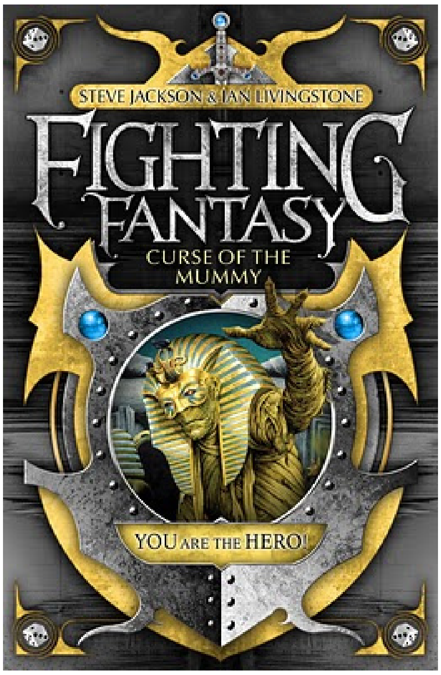
In the end, *Forest of Doom* is a product of the birth pangs of the *Fighting Fantasy* series, a reminder of a time when simply being a gamebook was a novelty. It is never going to win any awards for best gamebook and most fans will place other Livingstone titles like *Deathtrap Dungeon* and *City of Thieves* ahead of it. While still a readable, if limited, tumble through a corner of Allansia, it isn't a stand out entry in the range. Instead of the formulaic approach and the fight or flight encounters, *Forest of Doom* will be remembered because of the legacy it has passed down in the form of the wizard Yaztromo and the Shape Changer and its associated imagery. Once again, the book proves that appearances can be deceptive...

...the **encounter** with the **Shape Changer** serves as a **good reminder** to the reader of the **old adage** to not to **take anything** at **face value** – especially in a **Livingstone adventure**.

#14: Curse of the Mummy

Written by Jonathan Green • **Illustrated by** Martin McKenna
Wizard Books • **Published** February 3rd 2011 • **RRP** £5.99

Curse of the Mummy marks the end of the Puffin Era for *Fighting Fantasy*, at the other end of the spectrum from the previous "Series 2" title *Forest of Doom* and thus provides an interesting contrast that perhaps illustrates how the series had managed to evolve over the eleven years in between. For a start, pretty much gone are the days of the player simple being a wandering adventurer with nothing better to do than pick fights with the locals, *Curse of the Mummy* instead casting the player as a shipwrecked voyager off the Pirate Coast looking for work to eventually provide a means of getting home. Although taking on a cult and potentially an undead Mummy does seem a fairly desperate step up in terms of danger from protecting a trade caravan. The speed at which you as the player agree to this potentially suicidal scheme is also a little disturbing...



But, with the plot in motion it is time to look at the game as a whole. Like many of his books, Green likes to get stuck into the action straight away. As with his later *Bloodbones* adventure, this action consists of being set upon by a group of people wishing to do damage to the hero. After that, the player can take a quick trip to the markets in a moment similar to visiting Yaztromo in *Forest of Doom*. Part of the fun at shopping in such a place is trying to anticipate how these items might prove useful for the adventure ahead. My only disappoint would be that the opportunity to reenact that scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* wasn't offered to the reader, but perhaps such a moment is a touch too whimsical for a story that is happy to off the only other character with a reasonable part only a paragraph later. Jerran Farr's death serves to highlight the danger inherent in the mission being undertaken and to remove the one source of support the hero has at this point in the tale. It is also another moment of action that Green uses to keep the story moving.

But support isn't really a problem, Green filling in the spot left vacant by Jerran with a number of interesting characters. These included the retired treader-of-boards Cyranno and Lopar, the dog-headed Shaman of Spirit Rock. Interestingly, both seem to pine for the "good old days" when they were respectively a famous actor and a scholar bent on knowledge, and it is tempting to, given the something of a Livingstone "feel" to the book, to stretch that idea to encompass the book as a whole, looking backward to the height of the gamebook craze when *Fighting Fantasy* was essentially King of the Hill.

Like all good tales however, getting there is only half the fun. Once you've wandered the sun-baked desert for a while and armed yourself with whatever you can lay your hands on, you get to venture into the tomb of the villain. I can't help but feel that some of the more interesting encounters have taken place on the route not taken and this feeling pervades my journey through the tomb. While Green once again steps up the drama as events build movie-like towards the climax of Akharis' resurrection, his design of the adventure takes on a Livingstone-esque turn as a series of items the player has or hasn't collected prior to this point comes into play. It even reaches past the defeat of the villain, meaning the player can perish within the tomb even with the mission completed. It is right up their with Livingstone's SKILL roll right at the end of *Crypt of the Sorcerer*.

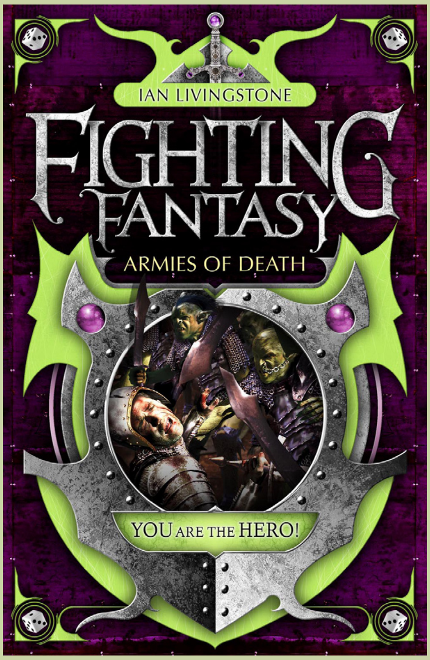
So to the summing up. The beginning didn't give the impression that it was as expansive as a desert adventure could have been (although that perhaps was a reflection of my choices along the way), and the slew of items that determine the final events of the book give it a crushed feeling. Despite this though, it is a worthy demonstration of how far the series had developed while still remaining true to what made the books so great in the first place. In the end, one can see it as a slightly more modern take on *Crypt of the Sorcerer*.

On a final note of appreciation, this latest reprint by Wizard not only has the enemy attribute corrections of the "Series 1" edition, but also quietly emends the errors caused by those corrections.

#15: Armies of Death

Written by Ian Livingstone • **Illustrated by** Nik Williams
Wizard Books • **Published** March 31st 2011 • **RRP** £5.99

This is a book I returned to with fond memories, unsure quite how it would measure up today with the rose-tinted glasses of yesteryear removed. And within pages I am back in familiar Livingstone territory having picked up a key and tooth in short order. I have the feeling that by the time I reach Agglax, I'm going to be weighed down by what I am carrying. Which does conjure up an image of the hero waving his free hand at the villain while searching his backpack, saying, "Can you hold on a moment? I know I left it in here somewhere..."



So, things are off to a flying start, more so if you took the boat. And the *Flying Toucan* is not the only boat to feature in the adventure, if you are willing to listen to the author wax lyrical about his boat *Harem* and the crew that sailed her. Whatever your feelings are about such a blatant Mary Sue, you have to accept that it does help to provide some desperately needed depth to an adventure that would otherwise possibly be another hack n' slash fest. Other such memorable moments in the adventure include the pie eating contest against Big Belly, the hard warrior woman Max and her team of mercenaries, and the opportunity to fall down drunk in a disreputable tavern and be fleeced of your belongings.

Leaving Livingstone and assorted moments of colour behind, we can see that the set pieces of the adventure fall into two broad groups. The first are like the above boat tale at Helen's House, and the other is the more traditional set ups of two choices, one of which leads to an instant death. Much has been made of this second group by other reviewers, because Livingstone in previous books didn't tend to give any clues as to which was the right choice to make. It is sadly the same here, where many of the decisions, especially those of helping people apparently in distress, are blind 50/50 choices.

However, if by some chance you didn't manage to get yourself done in by one of these sudden deaths, you have a fairly good chance of reaching Agglax with your army. Which brings us neatly to the big change from most other Livingstone adventures, the introduction of rules for mass battles between groups of people. This wrinkle in the usual rules amounts to a random die roll based on whether or not you have a larger number of troops. For this sort of adventure it is simple enough to keep track of and has the advantage of not slowing the game down which might have been one possible result of including mass battle combat.

Armies of Death then does what it says on the tin and not much more – there are armies and a lot of death. Those looking for something akin to the book it is a sequel to, *Trial of Champions*, are best off hoping that Livingstone decides to round things out by writing a sequel to this that goes back to Fang and that famous dungeon...

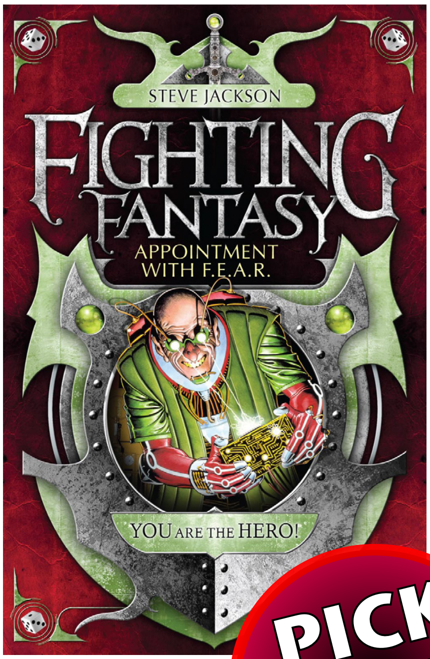
#16: Appointment with F.E.A.R.

Written by Steve Jackson • **Illustrated by** Declan Considine
Wizard Books • **Published** March 31st 2011 • **RRP** £5.99

It took me forever to eventually come to this book when I was reading the original Puffin editions. I'm not quite sure why that might have been the case, although the fact that it obviously wasn't your standard sword and sorcery adventure was possibly a contributing reason. It sat on the shelf of the local book store next to *Phantoms of Fear*, both books odd for the fact that I spent much time coveting them through appreciation of their fantastic covers, yet whenever I had the cash to buy a *Fighting Fantasy* title I always ended up choosing a different adventure...

Appointment with F.E.A.R. is one of author Steve Jackson's last throws of the dice for the *Fighting Fantasy* range, one where he is seeing just how far he can push the format of the books without actually breaking it. He does this in a number of ways, some more successful than others.

Most immediately apparent is that, as I noted at the start, it isn't one of the standard fantasy outings the series is famous for, nor is it even one of the oft-maligned science fiction escapades. This is a comic book superhero adventure delivered as a gamebook. Jackson's first innovation with this particular title then, is to broaden, for the third time, what constitutes a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure, having already introduced readers to the science fiction and horror genres with previous books. His choice of the superhero genre is an interesting one, especially as it was *not* followed by other gamebook ranges of the time, which instead explored history, crime, war, and espionage as other options to the standard fantasy fare. Given the larger-than-life aspects of both superhero comics and *Fighting Fantasy*, the pairing of the two in this adventure does seem fairly obvious, more so in 1984 than today however. The reader does after all have to remember that this is a pre-*Watchmen* interpretation of comic book heroes, from a time when comics were filled with over the top elements and not particularly restrained plots on the part of the villains. Indeed, in today's universe of post-*Dark Knight* storytelling, the Titanium Cyborg's plot to hold the world hostage via the "Star Wars" satellite system feels more akin to *Austin Powers* than to what now passes for *Superman*.



PICK OF THE ISSUE!

Which is precisely one problem with the adventure, in that given Jackson's sprinkling of the tale with injokes (a matter we'll come back to), it is often hard to tell whether the story is meant to be taken as a thrilling adventure or the gamebook equivalent of an episode of the 1960s television version of *Batman*. The reader is presented with a bewildering array of super villains (over twenty by my count) who barely get time to swan in, twirl a figurative moustache (especially figurative in the case of Sylvia Frost), and then be dispensed with by the Silver Crusader. Each encounter is so brief that they don't have the chance to make any impression on the reader, thus the few features they do present seem two dimensional at best.

> ...it is often **hard to tell** whether the story is **meant to be taken** as a **thrilling adventure** or the **gamebook equivalent** of an episode of the **1960s television version** of ***Batman***.

This problem extends to the main villain of the piece, Vladimir Utoshski (aka the Titanium Cyborg) who really should be scaling the heights of comic book characters like The Joker so that his capture at the end has some sort of interesting payoff. As the Titanium Cyborg is effectively held back to the very end of the adventure however, and coupled with the already noted thin plot, he never is given the opportunity to make his all important mark on the story. With a startling lack of convincing motivation on his part, or any of the other F.E.A.R. members, the final conflict with him and his defeat, seem fairly perfunctory and lacking in drama.

Two important other attempts to stretch the gamebook genre flow on from this decision to play in the world of comic book heroes and villains. The first is the choice of four super powers that the reader is presented with: *Super Strength*, *Psi-Powers*, *ETS*, and *Energy Blast*. This opportunity to pick additional skills before the start of an adventure is a first for the *Fighting Fantasy* series and marks an important evolution away from a reliance on simple additional stats like FEAR. Interestingly, Jackson doesn't allow for a Superman-like hero with several abilities, perhaps feeling that it would reduce the drama of the adventure.

The four powers are a nicely broad range of abilities, leaving the reader to ponder in anticipation of what sort of scrapes they can get into that need such powers to then get them out of. Jackson takes care to make sure that a roughly even number of opportunities to use each power appear in the text, meaning that each has as good a chance as the other of helping the player reach their goal. It is these, rather than the clues that give *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* that something extra in terms of storytelling, especially in those moments when confronting a villain and the player's choice of superpower drastically reduces their choices. You can only be left there at the bottom of the paragraph wondering exactly what you might have been able to achieve if only you had picked a different ability.

The second of the two further stretches of the *Fighting Fantasy* range is the introduction of Hero Points, which have the catch that killing a criminal involves the loss of Hero Points. As has been noted in the past by other reviewers, this "threat" (for want of a better word) of a loss of points has no bite to it. If it had been similar to the later HONOUR score of *Sword of the Samurai*, where the point loss eventually leads to ritual suicide, then the player might feel more concerned about the possibility of losing points and even make certain choices in the hopes of gaining them. As it stands, accidentally killing the occasional thug hardly seems worth the worry, especially after being conditioned by numerous Ian Livingstone adventures that offer the opportunity to attack and kill almost everyone you meet.

But does the book as a whole work, despite the sometimes flimsy nature of its parts? I would argue that the deciding factor is the injokes that abound in the adventure. While they possibly undermine the drama of the story as I suggested earlier, I feel in the wider view that the brevity of the encounters with the criminals does more to dash any prospect of real drama than the jokes, and that ultimately the injokes serve as a way of keeping things interesting for the reader when the narrative shows signs of flagging. In the end the book does work, even if parts don't gel as well as they could and it makes a worthwhile entry to the series, signalling the complexity that was to come with *Creature of Havoc*.

While it is by no means up there with the best, it does manage to hang together and is a brave attempt to push at the expected boundaries of what is or isn't *Fighting Fantasy*. Recommended, even if just for the moment where you can buy *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* in the gamebook.

www.fightingfantasycollector.co.uk

Collector **Jamie Fry** takes a moment or two to reflect of the hunt for older copies of the gamebooks, the oddity of some foreign language translations, and a few other tidbits.

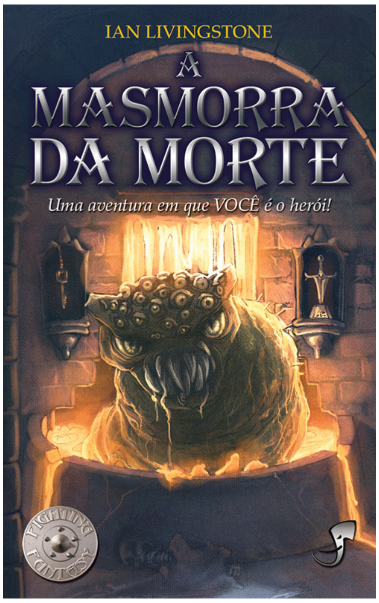
Adventures in the World of Gamebook Hunting

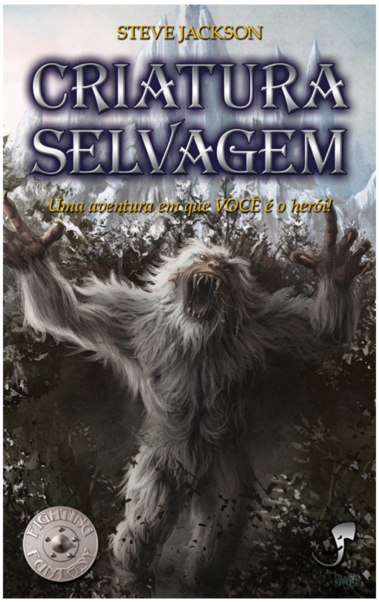
From all the feedback I am getting, it appears that it is getting harder to locate the books in charity shops or a boot sales. I tend to agree, as about all I can find these days are solely the modern Wizard editions. The days seem to have gone when I would chance upon a stack of green spines. Here is one such recent quote from a fan I'd like to share with you that inspired this article:

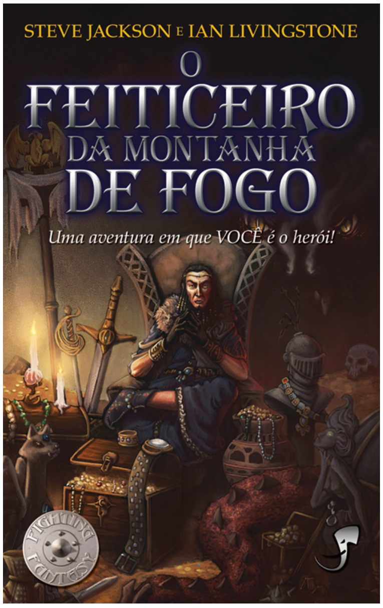
> *I just wanted to thank you for the short nostalgic trip I just took through your website ... Unfortunately I never quite completed the full collection of books, despite many attempts to do so – charity shops, library sales, pinching ... Thank you, however, for the chance to see a complete collection, as well as some titles, versions and publications I was not even aware of until just now. As much as I would liked to have continued, it has been at least 5+ years since I last saw a fantasy games book in a charity shop, let alone a title I do not already possess. Sadly it seems they are scarce these days, and due to the nature in which they are read are very difficult to find in good condition – many of my own are well thumbed, bent spines and quite tatty ... Great to see someone who still has a passion for them though, as I would not have thought it possible in this day of Wii's, PS3's and XBoxes where everyone seems to playing* World of Warcraft *style games in place of traditional book and dice games us 80s kids enjoyed...*

I don't know about you, but I do love an un-broken spine on all my books, especially when on display. In the early days of my collection I wasn't as fussy as I am today. I was originally on a mission just to get the books in my collection regardless of quality like the chap above. I couldn't afford to discriminate like nowadays where all the tatty copies have been upgraded and if on the rare occasion a book does pop-up in a charity shop or boot sale, I might leave it, especially where the spine is broken. It may seem obvious to say it, but adventure gamebooks are more likely to suffer from the broken spine because of the constant too-ing and fro-ing it requires in reading (playing) it.

I rejected a book once after handing it to an elderly cashier in a charity shop whom subsequently proceeded not only to lick her finger and thumb before opening the book but then, wait for it... yep, she opened the cover and rubbed her palm down the two open pages to read the faint price pencilled in the corner, splitting the spine – argh! You got it, I changed my mind and abandoned the sale (maybe if it was book 50 or so and above I might have still taken it). I also despise it when these shops continue to put a coloured sticker on the spine or a price ticket on the cover somewhere, more often than not when you try and remove it, it tears or leaves a mark.






STEVE JACKSON E IAN LIVINGSTONE
O FEITICEIRO DA MONTANHA DE FOGO
Uma aventura em que VOCÊ é o herói!
FIGHTING FANTASY

Of equal importance to me is the state of the Adventure Sheet on the inside. Blank is good, not so good if mildly used in pencil unless you can rub out use without a trace, but pen is bad. Whilst I am grateful for finding a book in good condition having passed these two tests, I can't help but feel the book went unread or they were very careful (like me) when it was in their possession. I also figure that if the Adventure Sheet remains unused they made their own like me or they cheated their way through. These days I use printed ones from the internet but no such thing existed when I was growing up so I used to replicate the adventure sheet by hand with a pencil and ruler.

Translations

Further to my previous article on the collection of signed books I acquired from Ian Livingstone last year I would like to share with you some of the queer translations I have experienced when trying to identify some of the books where I could neither identify them by the language nor cover. Luckily, an archive on www.gamebooks.org still exists that gives all the foreign variations.

Most books bear the same cover artwork as the UK original, others I could guess what it might be and the remainder I had to look inside for inspiration or on foreign fan sites. Here is where I had the most fun in learning what other countries believe the title to be or at least when I use a translator. In particular I refer to one such Brazilian/Portuguese website I had Google translate for me. My findings are as follows:

1	The Wizard of the Mountain of Fire
2	The Forest of Death
4	The Lost Ship
6	The Infernal Dungeon
8	The Swamp of the Scorpion
9	The Witch of the Snow
10	The Haunting Diabolic
12	Killer Space
17	The Challenge of Champions
18	Circles Kether
19	Shades of Destruction
21	The Castle of Nightmares
22	The Crypt of Witchcraft
23	Traveler of the Stars
24	Depths of Evil
25	Encounter with FEAR
26	The Gun Telak
27	Knight Sky
28	The Thief of Spirits
29	The Curse of the Vampire
30	Tower of Devastation
34	The Legend of Knights of Darkness
35	Return to the Mountain of Fire
36	The Lord of Chaos
37	Rescue Arion
39	The Looter of Riddles

Interestingly on the same site but this time within the forums I translated a few of the threads with differing results. *House of Hell*, shown above as *The Haunting Diabolic* becomes *The Mansion Diabolica*. Whereas, oddly published as number 39, *The Riddling Reaver*, came out as *The Looter of Riddles* or *Spoiler Charades*. If you want more fun with this if you are as sad as me then try out this other site http://planete-ldvelh.com/page/defi1.html for more hilarious titles when translated into English.

Odds & Ends

Whilst trawling through my books for inspiration I thought I'd briefly share with you a comment I found in a copy of *Howl of the Werewolf* that I had signed by Jonathan Green at Gamesfest 4, it simply says;

> *To Jamie, Arrooo!!*

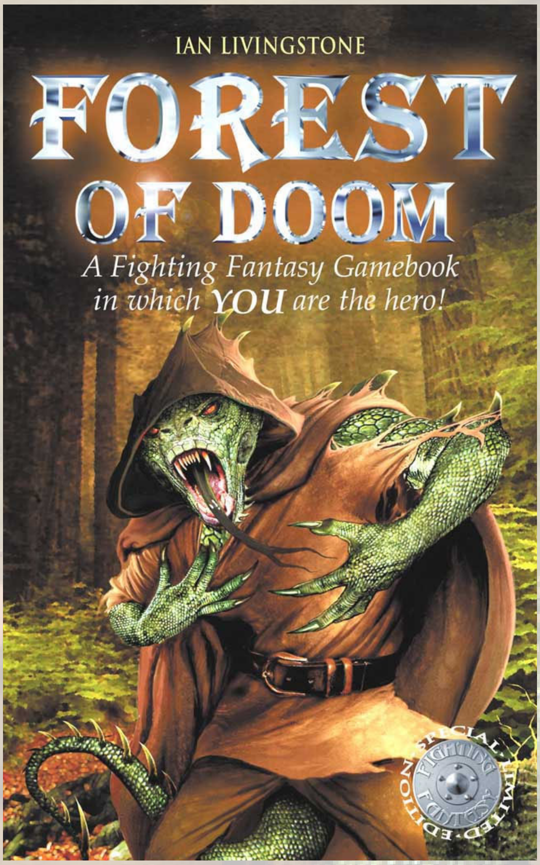
I also recall Jonathan signing a copy of *Stormslayer* for me on that same day. The thing is, he wrote the immortal words "May your Stamina Never Fail" in it, then passed it to Steve Jackson to sign, whom subsequently had a go at him (in a nice way of course) for stealing his line.

Finally, I must shamefully plug the new version of my checklist and price guide which contains updated material for 2011. Continue to keep an eye out for more books signed by Ian for sale by myself, if you want a full list get in-touch through the website. I am also writing a new version of the website in the background so apologies if I haven't updated the current one as often as you'd like, this has been due to technical issues with my old version of Frontpage and incompatibilities with the hosting service.

FIGHTING DANTASY

Dan revisits the Fighting Fantasy series, one gamebook at a time...

Remember reading your first *Fighting Fantasy* adventure? The desperate search for the items you need to win, the frantic dice rolls as you fight to stay in one piece mere paragraphs from your goal? **Dan Satherley** has decided to recreate those tense moments from our childhoods by working his way through the series book by book and recording his efforts as he goes.



Ian Livingstone's first solo-written *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook veers from the template set down by *Warlock* and *Citadel*, inasmuch you aren't a bounty hunter in search of riches – at least not till half way through the ubiquitous "Background".

Okay, so you're pretty much a pre-medieval Han Solo, but at least this time you're not raining on anyone's parade. The local Dwarfs of Stonebridge have lost their sacred hammer, and without it they're apparently unable to defend themselves against some nearby hill trolls and a neighbouring rival tribe of little people (a plot device similar to one used in the later Amiga/Sega game *Faery Tale Adventure*).

You've agreed to find the hammer for them, not bothering to learn the politics behind the theft – perhaps the hammer belonged to the other tribe first? Maybe the hill trolls were driven from their homeland by the security-deficient Dwarfs of Stonebridge and have a rightful claim to the land? Maybe the hammer's a tool of Dwarf police repression?

But slash and burn first, and ask questions later tends to be the way of *Fighting Fantasy* however, so off we go...

I arrived at Darkwood Forest (*Faery* has a "Mirkwood Forest"... and here the similarities end, I promise) strong and skillful but low on LUCK – that's alright I thought, I'm entering an ominously monikered forest, I'm going to need to fight a lot.

My first opportunity came quickly enough – before braving the dangers of the forest ("of doom", remember) I had to visit Yaztromo, a wizard, and immediately was offered the chance to fight him. Gees, Livingstone's no wouss. I passed, and instead decided to see what he could sell me. Yaztromo was a quick scribe – he scribbled no less than 80 words on a blackboard while I apparently waited (I hoped the Dwarfs of Stonebridge were patient and under no immediate threat. I read Stephen King's *The Stand* a couple of months back, and there's a character in that who spends half the damn book writing. People are so patient in the face of the apocalypse). I grabbed a bunch of stuff that sounded useful ("Nose Filters" sounded wonderfully specific, so they were a no-brainer. I've since discovered every family with a baby in the house should have some) and made my way into the forest.

The first person I came across was a thief. I didn't know this of course till after I'd freed him from the animal trap he was stuck in and said my goodbyes, the bastard. I resolved not to be so trusting in the future – these were probably the people who gave the forest its reputation, remember. Goodbye "Net of Entanglement", not that I needed you in the end...

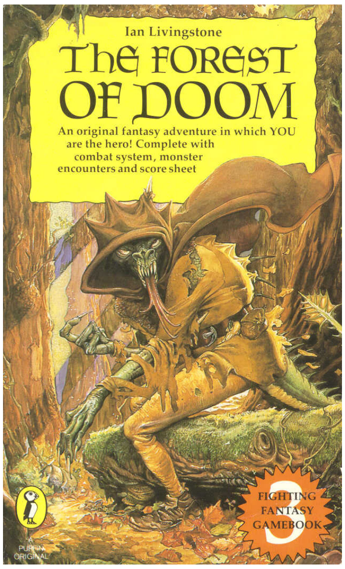
For a forest "of doom", Darkwood had a lot of well-trodden and distinct paths; I was often told I didn't feel like going a certain way, and had chosen another. The best I could do was go, "umm, okay."

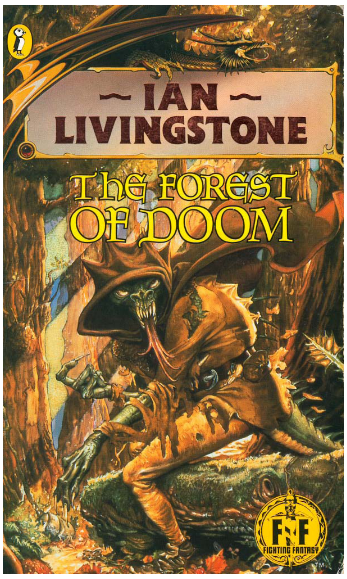
A turning point in my adventure happened soon after losing my net; I wished I'd been told I hadn't felt like eating mushrooms. Unfortunately, I had a choice, and at this early stage I was all for eating hallucinogenics; anything to break up the monotony of meeting untrustworthy types like thieves and Goblins that weren't Goblins but vicious, powerful Shape Changers. The mushrooms were "mix-up mushrooms", and swapped my SKILL and LUCK stores. I began with a SKILL of 10 and LUCK of 7; bugger. Total bugger. As a result, I was almost killed by the next ingrate I freed from capture, a barbarian who would otherwise have been vulture-feed.

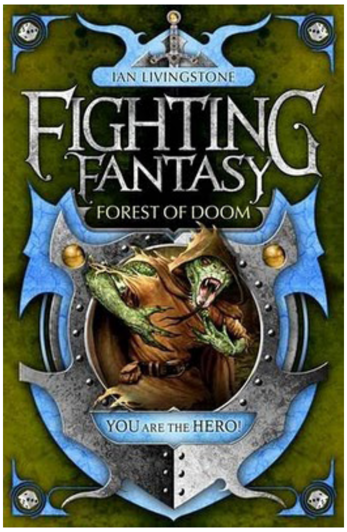
Once again I resolved not to trust anyone in this stupid forest that seemed to be teeming in arseholes and lacking in sacred hammers.

My crap SKILL score wasn't improved by an enchanted sword I was (now) luckily enough to be able to withdraw from the stone it was stuck in; no mention was made the +2 SKILL it

Art: © Martin McKenna, 2011


Ian Livingstone
The FOREST OF DOOM
An original fantasy adventure in which YOU are the hero! Complete with combat system, monster encounters and score sheet
FIGHTING FANTASY GAMEBOOK 3
PUFFIN ORIGINAL


~ IAN ~
LIVINGSTONE
The FOREST OF DOOM
F·F
FIGHTING FANTASY


IAN LIVINGSTONE
FIGHTING FANTASY
FOREST OF DOOM
YOU ARE THE HERO!

gave me could go over my *Initial* SKILL score, which was now a measly 7.

This is perhaps one of the main failings of the *Fighting Fantasy* series; the *Initial* SKILL being the maximum is a good idea in theory, but things like ENCHANTED SWORDS should be able to give you a bonus over and above the rusty blade you've been carrying for weeks. If I recall correctly, later gamebooks allowed bonuses over and above the usual maximum more often, if only while wielding a specific weapon, but not while doing other things like jumping pits and bashing down locked doors (which covers 95% of all tests-of-SKILL one encounters in Allansia).

I mean, why would carrying *Excalibur* make you any better at leaping holes in the ground? Can you use it as a pole, like in a pole vault? Maybe that's how it got stuck in that stone to begin with.

Anyway... I fought off some Vampire Bats, had a crap sleep and no breakfast and was killed by a "Dragon-like" creature called a Wyvern. I found neither the head nor the handle of the sacred hammer. Not even having an enchanted sword was any use. All in all, a disastrous diversion, and why the hell do those Dwarfs "need" a sacred hammer anyway? I thought Dwarfs largely spurned religious matters? (A quick fact check on the Wikipedia of Doom only confused the issue, so I'll leave it at that.)

If I recall correctly, and Titannica confirms, if you make it through the forest (as I nearly did) without both parts of the hammer, you have the chance to go through it again... resetting many of the set-pieces somewhat comically.

I wonder if the Dwarfs would accept four halves of a hammer...

Adapted from Fightingdantasy.blogspot.com

turn to paragraph 1.

COMING IN ISSUE #7

roleplaying rogue

He wrote three mini adventures in the pages of *Warlock*, alongside various articles, and penned the gamebook *Midnight Rogue*. **Graeme Davis** is interviewed by *Fighting Fantazine* about his travels in the world of Titan...

Queen of Shades

by **Paul Struth**

It should have been an adventure like any other; an ancient tomb, a forgotten treasure and a band of brave souls willing to risk their lives in pursuit of fame and fortune. Now, a day after your successful return to Kharé, the notorious cityport of traps, two of your fellow adventurers lie dead – will YOU be the next victim of the curse?

the fact of fiction: Seas of Blood

Warren McGuire returns for another instalment to set sail upon the Inland Sea in search of treaure of one kind or another...

THE ADVENTURE GAME

In the third part of his article on writing a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure, **Andrew Wright** provides guidance on the exciting world of flowcharts...

PLUS A FACE LIFT FOR THE MAGAZINE AND MUCH MORE!

DARKWOOD